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11 NOVEMBER 2021

Magic Max's knockout blow in Mexico

**Hamilton on the ropes after
Red Bull star's mega pass**



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Brit Conway becomes a double **World Endurance** champion

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Advantage Verstappen as Red Bull pace proves too much for Mercedes

How important was Max Verstappen's Turn 1 pass for the lead at last weekend's Mexican Grand Prix? It was certainly a superb moment from the Dutchman, immediately overcoming the disadvantage Red Bull had managed to give itself in qualifying, but there's a chance he'd have won the race anyway.

What's worrying for Mercedes is not so much that Verstappen won – that same combination came out on top in Mexico in both 2017 and 2018 (and arguably should have done in 2019), when Red Bull was less competitive than it is today. It was the margin of superiority that puts the pressure on Toto Wolff's squad. Lewis Hamilton did well to hold off Sergio Perez, not something he's had to do often in 2021.

Wolff is making all the right combative noises (see page 4), but the Red Bull RB16B is likely to be the car to beat at Interlagos this weekend. That means, providing Verstappen avoids disaster (such as clashing with Esteban Ocon, as he did in 2018), Hamilton is probably going to be 25 to 30 points behind with three races to go. Not impossible but tough, particularly given the current pace and reliability of the Red Bull.

• Voting for the 2021 Autosport Awards opens this week. Turn to p60 to see all the nominees and how you can have your say about the best performers in motorsport this year.



Kevin Turner

Kevin Turner
Chief Editor

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**NEXT WEEK
18 NOVEMBER**

Sao Paulo GP action
Can Lewis strike back?
Plus how we pick Young
Driver winner



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Zak Mauger/
Motorsport Images

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Hamilton didn't stay close to Verstappen for long in the Mexican GP



F1 TITLE FIGHT IS STILL ON, PLEDGES MERCEDES CHIEF

FORMULA 1

Mercedes Formula 1 chief Toto Wolff believes there is still “all to win” for the team despite its defeat to Red Bull in last weekend’s Mexican Grand Prix, and has denied that the championship is slipping away.

Mercedes entered Sunday’s race at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez hopeful of converting its front-row lockout into a result to boost Lewis Hamilton’s title hopes. But Red Bull bounced back in the race, with Max Verstappen scoring a dominant win to extend his drivers’ championship lead over Hamilton to 19 points, while Red Bull, for which Sergio Perez finished third, drew to one point off Mercedes in the constructors’ standings.

By failing to finish ahead of Verstappen in any of the past three races, Hamilton has seen a slender championship lead turn into a deficit of almost one race win, handing Red Bull the momentum entering the final four races.

Wolff made clear that no one in the team was accepting that the championship was slipping away, citing its dominant pace in last

month’s Turkish Grand Prix, where Valtteri Bottas cantered to victory, as proof of its strength.

“I’m a pretty realistic person, but I love motor racing, because anything can happen,” said Wolff. “None of us are ever going to leave this circuit with the mentality of ‘this is going away from us.’ There’s four races to go, there’s four wins to take, four DNFs to suffer. And we will just continue fighting.

“We know we have a great team. Our car was exceptionally good in Turkey. And I think we have all to win. When you look at the mathematical probability, obviously I’d rather be 19 points ahead than behind. But it is what it is.”

Asked if he felt he had to win this weekend in Brazil to stop Verstappen pulling more than one victory’s worth of points clear in the standings, Hamilton said: “I naturally feel I need to be winning every race. We need those extra points, not to lose those points, to try and regain — that was the goal going into the last race and the race before that and before that, and here this weekend. But you know, they’re just too quick, so [we’re] giving it

absolutely everything we’ve got, but unfortunately it’s not enough at the moment to compete with them.”

As well as Hamilton’s title hopes taking a knock in recent weeks, Mercedes has seen a 36-point lead fall to just a single point in the space of two races. While Red Bull racked up 40 points with Verstappen and Perez in Mexico, Mercedes left with 18 courtesy of Hamilton as Bottas finished 15th following a first-lap hit from behind.

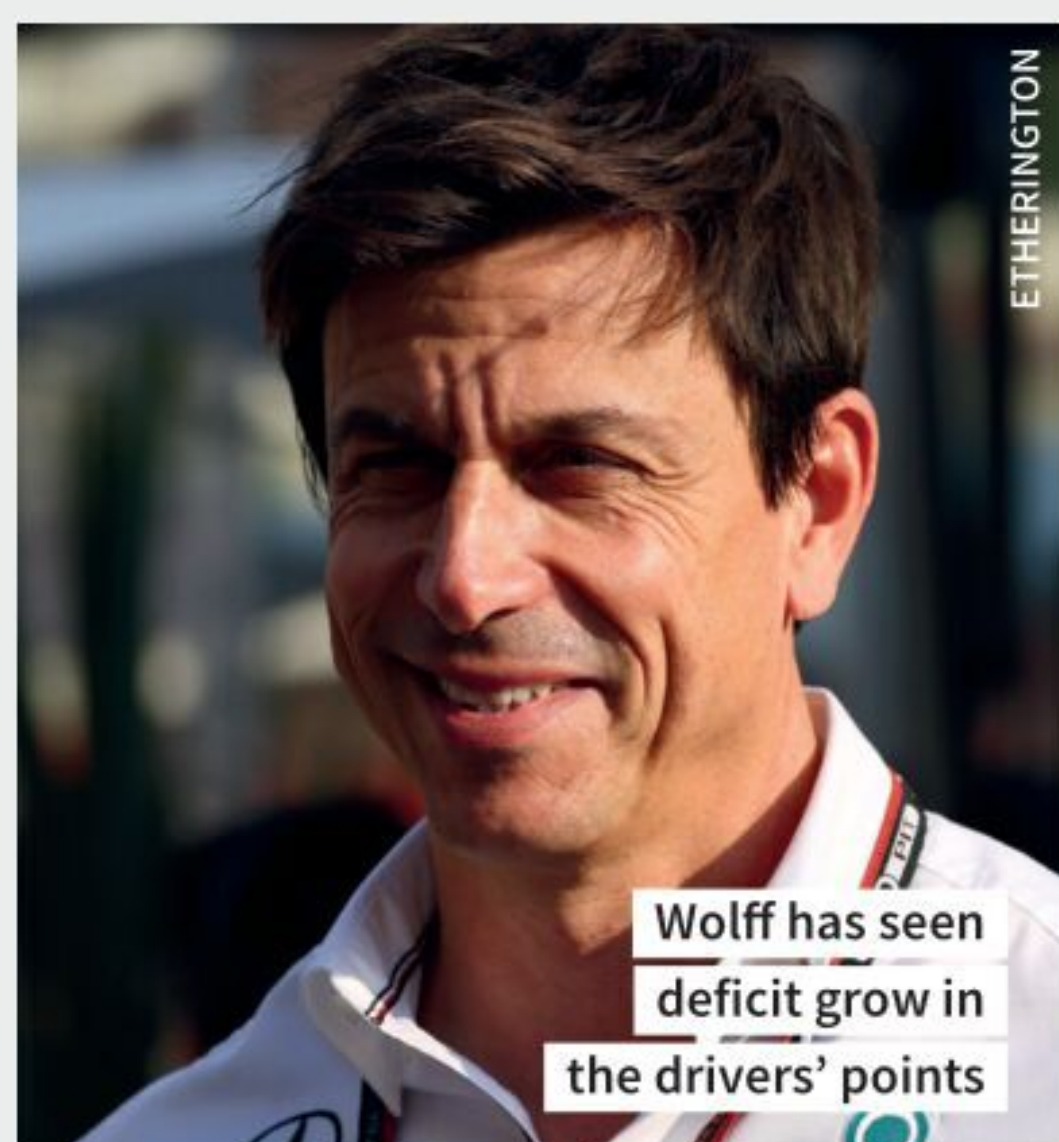
Despite the increasingly positive title outlook for Verstappen, Red Bull team boss Christian Horner made clear that there was no feeling within his camp that the championship was within its grasp.

“No, look, there are still 107 points available, so there’s a long way [to go],” Horner said. “Reliability is going to play a crucial role, maximising every weekend: strategy, pitstops. I have to say the team were flawless today, drivers did a great job. And the strategy was strong, so all around a very strong team performance.”

Verstappen also wanted to distance himself from getting carried away regarding a growing



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY
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IMAGES



Wolff has seen
deficit grow in
the drivers' points

championship advantage that, at the current trajectory, could mean he is crowned with one race to spare.

Despite accepting the points lead was "looking good", he shied away from taking too much confidence from the momentum Red Bull has built recently. "No, I don't believe in momentum," said Verstappen. "Every single race we have to try and nail the details and we didn't do that [in qualifying], so you know, things can go wrong very quickly, or can go right. It's going to be really tight and exciting to the end. This has been always a track really good for us, so I expect Brazil not to be like it was [in Mexico]."

Of the remaining four tracks, Interlagos and Yas Marina played host to Verstappen wins at their most recent races, while Losail and Jeddah are first-time events.

LUKE SMITH

➔ P16 MEXICAN GP

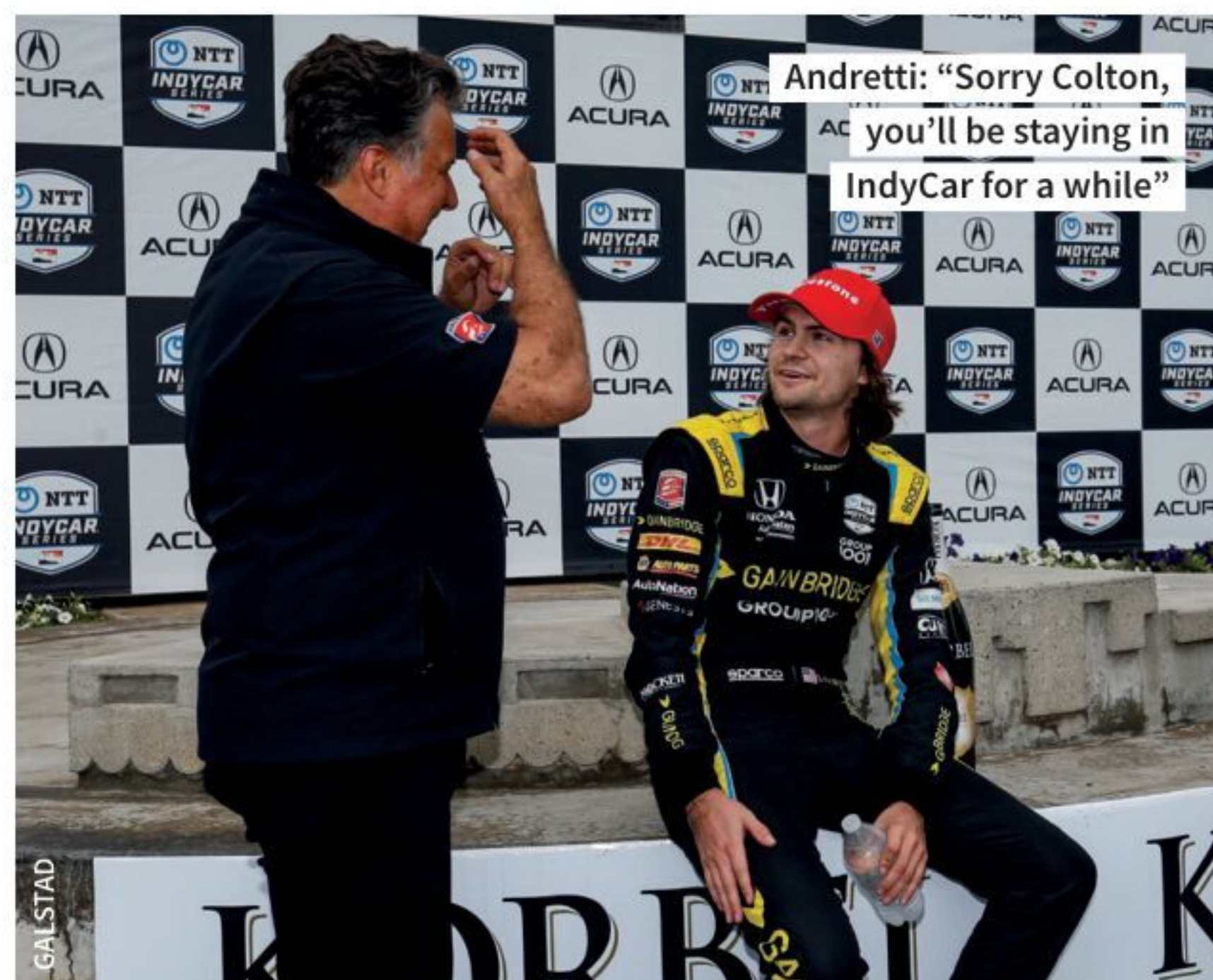
'CONTROL' HALTS ALFA ANDRETTI DEAL

FORMULA 1

Andretti Autosport's proposed takeover of Sauber's Alfa Romeo Formula 1 operation fell through due to "control issues" at the eleventh hour, according to team principal Michael Andretti.

Andretti had been pursuing the takeover to expand his racing portfolio and land an F1 drive for his IndyCar star Colton Herta. But the deal collapsed in recent weeks, prompting Andretti to deny that it was due to financial reasons.

"That couldn't be further from the truth – it had nothing to do with that," said former IndyCar champion Andretti. "It basically came



Andretti: "Sorry Colton, you'll be staying in IndyCar for a while"

down to control issues in the final hours of the negotiations. That's what killed the deal. I've always said if the deal is not right, we're not going to do it, and in the end it wasn't right. So we continue to look for other opportunities."

Andretti later added: "Unfortunately at the eleventh hour, control

issues changed, and it was a deal that we had to step away from because we couldn't accept it."

Asked to clarify if he meant that Andretti Autosport was expected to "buy it and not control it", Andretti nodded and said: "Basically."

LUKE SMITH &
DAVID MALSHER-LOPEZ



Chinese GP gets extension

FORMULA 1

Formula 1 chiefs have extended the Chinese Grand Prix's deal until 2025, even though the Shanghai race isn't on next year's calendar.

The event was the first to fall foul of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020, and it also did not take place this year. With international travel restrictions still tight as the country bids to keep control of the impact of COVID-19, F1 has decided to again steer clear for 2022 to avoid any risk of a late disruption.

Despite the ongoing absence, F1 has long been open about it being committed to racing in the country, and it has duly agreed a contract extension.

F1 CEO Stefano Domenicali said: "This is great news for all of our fans in China and we are delighted to announce this agreement. Our partnership with the promoter Juss Sports is incredibly strong and we look forward to continuing our long-term partnership."

"While we are all disappointed we could not include China on the 2022 calendar due to ongoing pandemic conditions, China will be restored to the calendar as soon as conditions allow and we look forward to being back with the fans as soon as we can."

The deal comes as Shanghai-born Guanyu Zhou remains in contention for an Alfa Romeo F1 seat in 2022.

JONATHAN NOBLE

Glickenhause is served WEC entry ultimatum

WEC

The Glickenhause Hypercar team will be required to enter and commit to racing one car in every race if it wants to return to the World Endurance Championship next year. That was the message from series boss Frederic Lequien last weekend in Bahrain.

Lequien's call came in the face of repeated statements from Jim Glickenhause, the founder of the boutique American marque, that he has little interest in contesting the WEC races outside Europe in Japan and Bahrain. He said that early this season before the Fuji round was replaced by a second race at the Bahrain International Circuit, and he has said it again after the last outing for the Glickenhause-Pipo 007 LMHs at the Le Mans 24

Hours in August. He had always insisted that the WEC organisation and series promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest are understanding of his position.

Lequien stated that Glickenhause will be required to race at least one 007 Le Mans Hypercar "for all the season, that is very clear".

"We don't want to sound pretentious, but we are an FIA world championship, which means we have to follow rules," he said. "Also for the other competitors it is fair that he competes in all the rounds."

Lequien explained that any second entry from Glickenhause for regular WEC rounds or Le Mans in June would be assessed by the relevant selection committees.

In the wake of Lequien's comments, Glickenhause



reiterated that he is not committed to all six races in 2022. "It is our aim to be at Sebring and Spa before Le Mans and definitely have two cars at the 24 Hours," he said.

"We would like to go to Monza after Le Mans and to

keep racing in the WEC, but what happens will depend on the Balance of Performance. If we get a fair BoP we will work with our partners and sponsors to try to do the rest of the championship."

GARY WATKINS

Nakajima bows out of Toyota line-up

WEC

Kazuki Nakajima's long career with the Toyota World Endurance Championship team came to an end in Bahrain last weekend – at least as a driver. He is leaving Toyota Gazoo Racing's line-up after 10 years and nine seasons, but is set to take a new role within the sportscar squad.

Toyota announced in the run-up to Saturday's Bahrain 8 Hours that the three-time Le Mans 24 Hours winner was standing down. The truth is that he has been stood down in favour of Toyota development driver Ryo Hirakawa, who should be announced as part of the two-car line-up of GR010 HYBRIDs as early as next month. That announcement is expected to contain news of 36-year-old Nakajima's new job, which is likely to include working with Hirakawa and other young drivers on Toyota's junior programme.

Whether Nakajima continues racing



with Toyota in Japan or hangs up his helmet remains unclear. He expressed an intent to continue next season in Super Formula, where he has raced for the past 11 seasons for the TOM'S team. That appears not to have been decided as Toyota's racing hierarchy works out its plan for him.

"There is, of course, a bit of sadness to be away from a race drive," said the former Williams Formula 1 driver, who took a 17th WEC victory in Bahrain last Saturday. "But also I am really looking for the future already: I have some sadness and also have a positive feeling."

He added that the announcement on Wednesday is "part of a big change coming". Racing on in Super Formula, he said, is "the plan but not decided".

World Rally Championship superstar Sebastien Ogier climbed aboard the winning GR010 in the WEC rookie test in Bahrain the day after the series finale. The seven-time WRC champion completed more than 80 laps, ending up with a best time of 1m50.647s. That was nearly two seconds off the best Toyota time of the test set by Mike Conway during a six-lap run.

GARY WATKINS

Hulkenberg: no to Indy future

INDYCAR

Ex-Formula 1 driver Nico Hulkenberg has ruled out a move into the IndyCar Series following his maiden test last month, citing “personal reasons”.

Hulkenberg has been without a full-time race seat since losing his F1 drive with Renault at the end of 2019. He retains an F1 role as Aston Martin’s reserve driver, and made two substitute appearances for the Silverstone-based team last season under its previous name of Racing Point.

To evaluate a potential move into IndyCar, Hulkenberg took part in a test with the Arrow McLaren SP team at Barber Motorsports Park two weeks ago, completing more than 100 laps (right). The German told Autosport ahead of the test that IndyCar was “definitely interesting” to him, and that the racing looked “very enjoyable and fun”.

But Hulkenberg announced on social media last week that he would not be moving into IndyCar. “It was exciting to test an Indycar two weeks ago and I am grateful to Arrow McLaren SP for this opportunity,” he wrote. “However for personal reasons I decided not to go ahead with it. Keep you posted on my future plans.”

Arrow McLaren SP has been weighing up options to expand its IndyCar efforts to a third car in the near future, with an



additional entry slated for next year’s Indianapolis 500 and later in the season before a full-time programme in 2023. The team fielded Pato O’Ward and Felix Rosenqvist full-time this season, with Juan Pablo Montoya joining in a third car for the Indy 500.

McLaren Racing CEO Zak Brown said ahead of the test that Hulkenberg had been “right towards the top of the list” for the team regarding a third driver for the future.

Hulkenberg, who won the 2015 Le Mans 24 Hours with Porsche, recently became a

father when his wife gave birth to a baby girl in September, meaning any possible switch to a programme based in the US would be a big commitment to make.

● Indy Lights racer Devlin DeFrancesco has been confirmed in the Andretti Steinbrenner Autosport entry for next year’s IndyCar Series in place of fellow Canadian James Hinchcliffe. DeFrancesco, sixth in the Lights standings this year, has tested the car at Sebring and Barber Motorsports Park.

LUKE SMITH



New Porsche to run next month

WEC

The new Porsche LMDh prototype will run for the first time before Christmas. The German manufacturer will become the first of the six marques so far committed to the category to put a car on track ahead of the arrival of the LMP2-based category in 2023.

Porsche is on target to hit a schedule it outlined back in the summer. Its LMDh, developed around the next-generation Multimatic P2 architecture, will be given a shakedown either at the Weissach test track on Porsche’s motorsport and research and

development campus or a similar facility nearby. It will then move on to proper circuit testing in the new year.

“The schedule is tight, but we are still heading for that,” said new Porsche motorsport boss Thomas Laudenbach (left). “I think we are in good shape and making good progress. It will be some kind of roll-out, really to see if all the systems are right and to do the set-up and the calibration, not proper performance testing.”

Full technical details of Porsche’s LMDh – and Audi’s version – are yet to be released.

GARY WATKINS

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MAJOR TITLES

1994 British Touring Car Championship
2003 European Touring Car Championship
2009 World Touring Car Championship
2018 World Touring Car Cup

TOURING CAR RACE WINS

World Touring Cars	30
European Touring Cars	21
British Touring Cars	12
Italian Superturismo	8
German Super Touring	2
DTM/ITC	1
TCR International	1
Spanish Touring Cars	1
Belgian Procar	1

Tarquini calls time at age 59

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

Veteran tin-top hero Gabriele Tarquini has announced that he will retire at the end of the current World Touring Car Cup season, bringing down the curtain on a professional racing career spanning almost 40 years.

The 59-year-old made the revelation ahead of last weekend's penultimate round of the WTCR campaign at Adria, and will bow out following this month's season finale at Sochi in Russia.

The Italian is best known for his tin-top exploits, winning World, European and British titles, but also contested 38 Formula 1 grands prix from 1987-95 and made one Le Mans 24 Hours start in 1985.

"I feel very sad — after a long career that felt like it would never end, you think this moment will never come," said Tarquini. "In life, everything has a start and a finish and I am old enough to understand this. It was important to me to announce my decision at my home race in Italy — this is the right moment."

Tarquini has represented Alfa Romeo, BMW, Honda, SEAT and Lada in different series over the years, and has been part of the Hyundai stable since the WTCC's rebirth as WTCR in 2018, winning the first title of the series' new era at the age of 56.

Hyundai team boss Andrea Adamo paid tribute to Tarquini, who was a driving force in the development of the South Korean

marque's i30 N TCR challenger with which he won the WTCR title.

"It is impossible to put into words how much of an impact Gabriele has had on Hyundai," said Adamo. "It is hard to come to terms with him putting down his helmet, and he will be sorely missed."

"I thought my 2009 WTCC title would have been the last one, instead I won WTCR nine years later and I'm still able to win races now..." added Tarquini. "I have really enjoyed those last few years, as I was more relaxed and had no ambitions to build a career, like the younger people have."

JAMIE KLEIN

➔ P15 OPINION

Bearman is Ferrari junior after second F4 title

FORMULA 4

Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Award finalist Ollie Bearman has won a place on the Ferrari Driver Academy.

The 16-year-old Briton last weekend clinched the German Formula 4 title at the Nurburgring. With the Italian crown already in his pocket, that means Bearman is the first driver in history to win both of the world's two most prestigious series in the category.

Bearman was also quick in last week's FIA F3 test at

Valencia (see right), and is expected to contest the series next year with Prema Racing. He is one of two drivers, along with Brazilian karter Rafael Camara, added to the FDA following recent assessments.

"It is a great way to end what has been a really good season for me," said Bearman. "Just spending a week in Maranello was in itself amazing."

Bearman had a nervous final weekend in German F4 (right) with Van Amersfoort Racing. He was ruthlessly chopped by main rival Tim Tramnitz off the start



of race one, and pitted for a new front wing, but thanks to a safety car he caught up the field and raced through to fifth while

Tramnitz won. He won the second race, then finished fourth, ahead of Tramnitz, in the reversed-grid finale.

IN THE HEADLINES

TANAK TO SKIP MONZA

Ott Tanak, the 2019 World Rally champion, is standing down from his Hyundai drive for next week's WRC season finale at Rally Monza due to what he has described as "personal family matters". His place will be taken by Teemu Suninen – the Finn joined Hyundai for last month's Rally Spain, where he drove in the Rally2 class. Estonian Tanak has scored one win this season and lies fifth in the points, while Hyundai has a slim chance of wresting the manufacturers' crown from Toyota. "This is a tough decision to make, but it's a needed one," he added.

RATEL INVOLVED IN ALMS

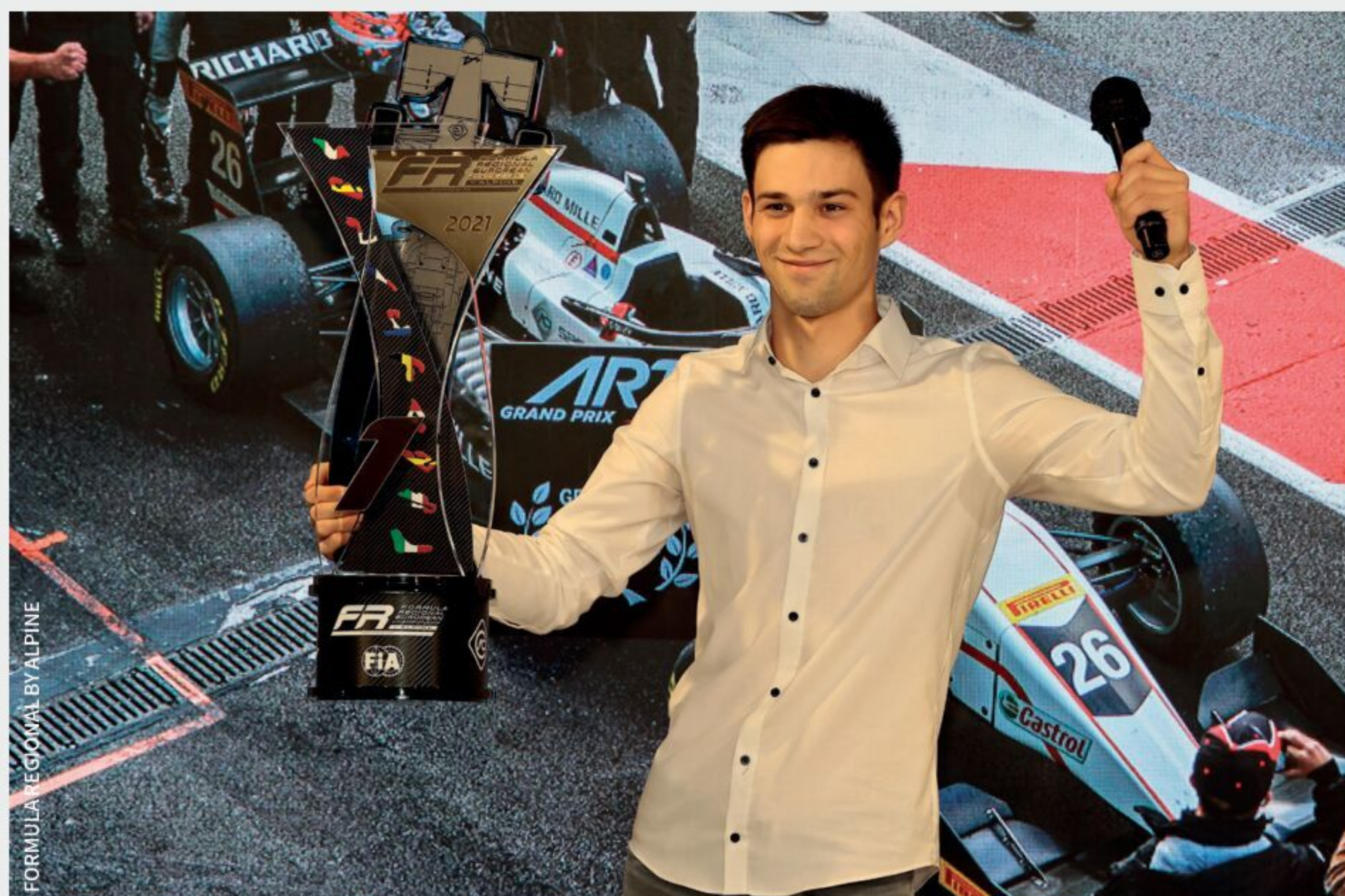
GT boss Stephane Ratel is teaming up with the Automobile Club de l'Ouest to run the Asian Le Mans Series from 2023. The new arrangement will include linking his GT World Challenge Asia with the Asian LMS. There will be a joint GT classification across the two series. This will come with an automatic entry for the Le Mans 24 Hours in 2024, while another will be awarded to the winning team competing in either the Pro-Am or Gold Cup class of the GTWC Europe.

CALDWELL'S WEC DEBUT

Olli Caldwell, a reversed-grid race winner in the FIA Formula 3 Championship with Prema Racing this year, made his prototype debut in last weekend's Bahrain 8 Hours World Endurance Championship round. The 19-year-old shared the ARC Bratislava ORECA-Gibson 07 with team boss Miroslav Konopka and series returnee Nelson Panciatici.

NOVALAK MOVES INTO F2

Another FIA F3 racer, Clement Novalak, will step up to Formula 2 for next month's final two rounds at Jeddah and Yas Marina with MP Motorsport, before a full campaign with the Dutch team in 2022. The Frenchman, third in the F3 points this year, replaces Lirim Zendeli.



Saucy steps up to F3 with ART

FORMULA 3

Newly crowned Formula Regional European by Alpine champion Gregoire Saucy has become the first driver confirmed for next season's FIA Formula 3 Championship, hot on the heels of topping the series' three-day post-season test at Valencia last week.

The 21-year-old Swiss (above) will stay on with ART Grand Prix for his move up the ladder, continuing for a third season a relationship that dates back to their Formula Renault campaign in 2020.

Saucy secured eight wins from the 30-plus FRECA grid this year, although had never previously scored a race victory in car racing. "After two years of a fruitful collaboration, ART Grand Prix was very keen to take another step forward with Greg," said team boss Sebastien Philippe. "He showed the full extent of his talent and maturity in 2021 and in addition to this, we have come to know and appreciate each other both personally and sportingly."

Saucy's time on the third and final morning of the Valencia test put him 0.092s ahead of 2021 FIA F3 ace Caio Collet (MP Motorsport) in the session, and eclipsed the previous day's best set by Red

Bull Junior Jak Crawford, the American having a maiden F3 runout with Prema Racing, by 0.068s.

Both sessions on the opening day were led by 2021 series runner-up Jack Doohan for Van Amersfoort Racing, which returns to FIA F3 competition next season for the first time since 2018. Doohan also headed the final afternoon, while the remaining session (the second afternoon) was topped by Saucy's fellow FRECA graduate Franco Colapinto with MP.

TOP 10 VALENCIA TIMES

POS	DRIVER (TEAM)	TIME
1	Gregoire Saucy (ART)	1m21.300s
2	Jak Crawford (Prema)	1m21.368s
3	Caio Collet (MP)	1m21.392s
4	Jack Doohan (VAR)	1m21.401s
5	Roman Stanek (Trident)	1m21.422s
6	Franco Colapinto (MP)	1m21.534s
7	Ollie Bearman (Prema)	1m21.593s
8	Zane Maloney (Trident)	1m21.597s
9	Kaylen Frederick (Hitech)	1m21.629s
10	David Vidales (Campos)	1m21.723s

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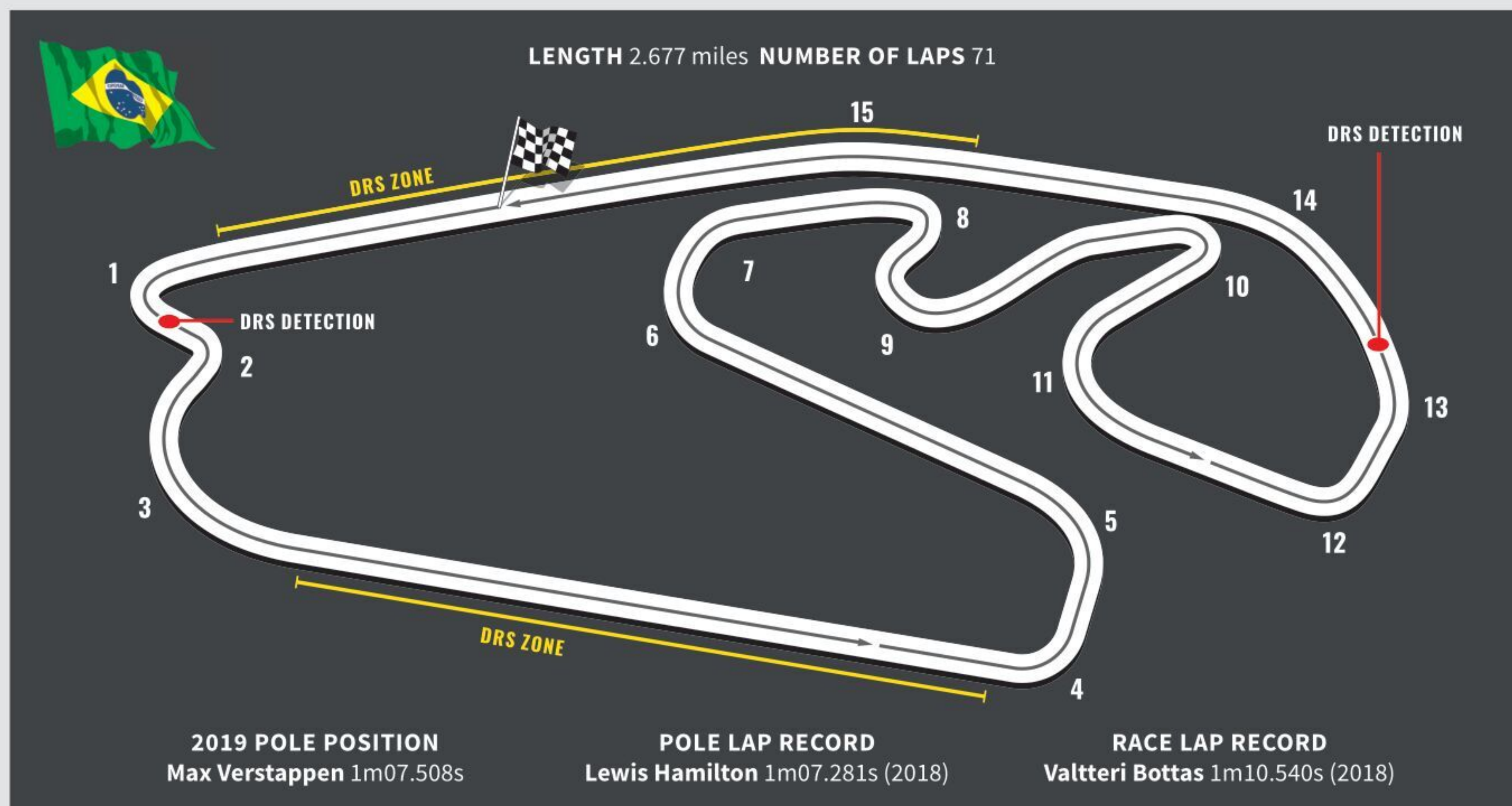
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F1 SAO PAULO GRAND PRIX PREVIEW



UK START TIMES

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Saturday 13 November
FP2 1500
SPRINT 1930

Sunday 14 November
RACE 1700

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TYRE ALLOCATION



CHAMPIONSHIP POSITIONS

Drivers

1	Verstappen	312.5
2	Hamilton	293.5
3	Bottas	185
4	Perez	165
5	Norris	150

Constructors

1	Mercedes	478.5
2	Red Bull	477.5
3	Ferrari	268.5
4	McLaren	255
5	Alpine	106



CIRCUIT STATS

Previous winners

2019	Max Verstappen	Red Bull
2018	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2017	Sebastian Vettel	Ferrari
2016	Lewis Hamilton	Mercedes
2015	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2014	Nico Rosberg	Mercedes
2013	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull
2012	Jenson Button	McLaren
2011	Mark Webber	Red Bull
2010	Sebastian Vettel	Red Bull



Best results

Vettel	1st x 3
Hamilton	1st x 2
Raikkonen	1st x 1
Verstappen	1st x 1
Alonso	2nd x 3
Bottas	2nd x 1
Gasly	2nd x 1
Sainz	3rd x 1
Ricciardo	4th x 1
Perez	4th x 1



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Not making errors when it matters

A pattern appears to be developing as Max Verstappen learns from his mistakes and delivers when the pressure's cranked up. That's crucial in a close title battle

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

There was one clear chance to get ahead, no guarantee that he'd get another. The move would require supreme skill and confidence, with a heavily scrutinised track-limit marker to worry about. Get it right and a crucial grand prix victory would be his. Max Verstappen got that exact scenario wrong at the end of March's Bahrain Grand Prix. But he nailed it at the start of the Mexican GP last weekend, where his double pass on the front-row-sharing Mercedes pair was one of the overtaking moves of the season so far.

There's now something of a pattern developing with Verstappen and these small-yet-big, fine-margin moments, upon which world championships tend to hinge. He missed out on a pole that was there for the taking at Imola with a driving error early in his final lap. In Portugal, having muscled his way past Hamilton, Verstappen rather cracked under the subsequent pressure from the hotly pursuing Mercedes, later slipping wide out of the penultimate corner. But such minor moments have been missing of late.

In Mexico, when the pressure was at its greatest, Verstappen delivered. The pressure was on because, really, Verstappen had more to lose last weekend. Yes, he'd arrived with a bolstered points lead after his Austin victory, but Red Bull was always expected to win at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez – just as it is this weekend at Interlagos. Second in the circumstances was a fine

“Verstappen really delivered at Turn 1. The pass was the move of a champion”

result for Hamilton, who needs to hang on during this two-race streak on Red Bull 'turf' before heading to the unknowns of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the reworked Abu Dhabi track.

Red Bull's 'favourite' tag increased pressure and expectation on Verstappen last weekend, with the former elevated further when qualifying went so badly wrong. Plus, although his pace in free air proved how much better the RB16B was in Mexico last weekend, Verstappen risked getting stuck behind Hamilton for the race's duration if the world champion led after the first lap, given the passing difficulty Sergio Perez later encountered.

Strategy choices and Verstappen's own tenacity may well have swung the race back to the Dutchman, but winning at Turn 1 was still Red Bull's best path to victory. And Verstappen really delivered there. The pass – aided by Red Bull's later-braking ability at that

point versus Mercedes thanks to its bigger rear wing – was the move of a champion. And Verstappen produced the drive of a champion after that to take a third Mexico City win in the past four visits, the missing 'win' arguably being the result of a qualifying mistake in 2019 that he avoided this time.

There are still minor points to his 2021 game that need to be improved. Verstappen still needs to iron out the small struggle he seems to have switching from Q2 medium tyres to Q3 softs – another factor in Red Bull's Saturday shambles last weekend. Also, it's still unclear exactly how he will react the next time there's another genuine 50-50 passing situation with Hamilton. After all, a collision that takes them both out now ultimately benefits the points leader, so Verstappen can afford to retain his ultra-aggressive style, but at the same time he cannot afford to be the one solely taken out, *à la* Silverstone, if both drivers refuse to back down.

And so to Brazil. Red Bull arrives once again as the favourite. But it is favoured for different reasons. It's clear that Honda's altitude edge is gone thanks to Mercedes' efforts to better its power unit cooling, and in any case Interlagos is 1480 metres lower than Mexico City, at 760m above sea level. This means every F1 team will be implementing more of a set-up compromise to nail the Interlagos layout, not just bolting on their max-downforce packages to get the best lap time from the thin Mexico City air.

The unpredictable Sao Paulo weather could well be a factor, with Mercedes director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin predicting: "If it's a hot circuit then it's probably going to move it in their direction; a bit of cloud cover may well suit us."

As ever, understanding how the tyres are working – with different compounds to when F1 last visited Brazil in 2019 – and the track surface will be vital. Red Bull got this wrong last month in Turkey, while Mercedes nailed it – these are among the details Verstappen highlights.

One thing that may not be a factor for Red Bull this time around concerns the rear wing cracks it has picked up when preparing for qualifying at the past two races. At Austin this was caused by the considerable surface bumps. In Mexico, the team's biggest rear wing was being subjected to speeds it wasn't designed to encounter – the part is typically a piece of a Monaco/Hungaroring special where average speeds are low.

Pressure changes at this time of year with a world title on the line. Hamilton knows this well, while Verstappen is going through this process for the first time in F1. But the Red Bull racer is showing he can learn from mistakes, which strengthens his position as the time that really matters in this ultra-close championship battle approaches. 🏆

➔ P16 MEXICAN GP REPORT



The fight WEC could do without

When the GTE Pro drivers' and manufacturers' championships climaxed at the season finale in Bahrain, it was in a way that no one would have wanted

GARY WATKINS

That wasn't the way for two prestigious World Endurance Championship titles to be settled. The GTE Pro battle between Ferrari and Porsche at the Bahrain 8 Hours last weekend was a corker that deserved to be decided in a straight fight on track. Right now the drivers' and manufacturers' championships seem to be determined not out in the heat of the desert night but in an air-conditioned office.

The important question about the messy business last Saturday was which office: race control or the stewards' room? Porsche contended that the decision to make Ferrari driver Alessandro Pier Guidi give back the position after clouting its car driven by Michael Christensen wasn't based on the correct procedures. The tenet of its rejected protest was that the sanction for the #51 Ferrari the Italian shared with James Calado came solely from the race director, whereas the FIA International Sporting Code demands that such driving offences must be reported to the stewards.

Porsche's protest was summarily rejected on the grounds that the code was in fact adhered to. I say 'summarily' because the stewards' bulletin was stamped 11.16pm. If Porsche took the full 30 minutes available to it to file its protest following the publication of the provisional results 17 minutes after the 10pm race finish, the deliberation lasted no more than half an hour.

Yet that was pedestrian by the standards of the call demanding

“The lesser penalty was the pragmatic call, one made to keep a fantastic race alive”

Pier Guidi relinquish the lead rather than receiving a harsher sanction. That came well inside two minutes.

Pier Guidi's times through sectors 1 and 2 on the lap after the incident were pretty much normal, but in the final sector he was eight seconds off what he'd been doing on previous laps. That means he reacted to a call to move over some time during S3.

His times for the first two sectors were 37s and 44s, and 47s for sector 3. I get to somewhere between 100 and 110s by guessing he was halfway through the final third when he reacted to the call. You need to add the few seconds that it took him to start the next lap after the bump with Christensen at the final corner, but also subtract any time it took for the AF Corse Ferrari team to communicate the information to their driver.

My question is simple: could the stewards really have made

a decision in this time? Such a decision would need to have involved viewing video evidence of the clash multiple times. And I mean watching multiple angles multiple times.

The live TV feed of the race fleetingly showed the race director, Eduardo Freitas, in discussion with a colleague immediately after the incident. Was it with one of the stewards who had ventured into race control? I can't tell you the answer to that one.

Neither can I tell whether further data was called upon before the decision was made. In-time telemetry streams are available and I would argue that these needed to be examined to determine whether Christensen did anything untoward in the second or so before the impact. The Dane insisted that he did nothing unusual as he was lapped by the United Autosports LMP2 ORECA. He told me afterwards that he had "to make sure I can make the corner". That probably meant braking slightly early to ensure he could tuck in behind the prototype and still hit the apex, all-important in a corner followed by a long straight. But Pier Guidi would have known that.

I'm sure a call to a driver to cede position when he biffs another car from behind isn't unprecedented, but it is definitely unusual. No stewards' report has been published on the incident itself, but the sanction given to Pier Guidi means it must have been ruled as some kind of racing incident. Anything more serious, and a stop/go would have been the required penalty.

It matters not that Pier Guidi didn't do it on purpose. He said he didn't, and I don't think anyone doubts him. But that is irrelevant if Christensen was doing nothing unusual.

The lesser penalty handed to Pier Guidi was undoubtedly the pragmatic call, one made to keep a fantastic race alive. It backfired because Christensen ducked into the pits in the #92 911 RSR he shared with championship contenders Kevin Estre and Neel Jani at the end of the lap following the incident. It was a scheduled splash almost exactly an hour after the car's previous stop. Pier Guidi followed suit at the end of the following lap, came out of the pits just under a couple of seconds ahead, and pushed on to win the race.

It turned out that the call to move over was rescinded. Exactly why isn't clear. Did Porsche waive its right to get the position back by pitting Christensen? Or was it ruled that the eight or so seconds Pier Guidi lost by slowing in his attempts to hand the place back were deemed to be enough of a penalty? It should be added, however, that the Porsche resumed 10s behind after its spin.

There has been no official explanation and there needs to be. So many unanswered questions about the last 11 minutes of the GTE Pro battle last weekend just can't be good for the WEC. The only thing we know for certain is that this one is going to run and run. ❧

P32 WEC BAHRAIN REPORT



Spry and retiring

Gabriele Tarquini is hanging up his famed Spiderman helmet at the age of 59. Time to celebrate the career of a man who is universally loved within the sport

MARCUS SIMMONS

The early-season European Formula 2 rounds at Silverstone and Thruxton always gave British enthusiasts their tantalising first view of talents we'd often only read about in the back pages of Autosport through their exploits in foreign F3 races. When F2 was dropped for 1985 and replaced by Formula 3000, the field that assembled for the very first race at Silverstone included John Nielsen and Claudio Langes (at least we'd seen them in European F3) and reigning Italian champion Alessandro Santin. How would they get on? Nielsen did well, of course, but the emerging star of that weekend was a curly haired 23-year-old Italian who no one had ever heard of.

Gabriele Tarquini finished fifth at the wheel of a Sanremo Racing March, and it's no exaggeration to say that he was a sensation. His car-racing exploits amounted to a couple of part-seasons in Italian F3 in elderly and uncompetitive machinery, although he had also won a world gearbox karting title in 1984. Thanks to his form at Silverstone, and his eventual sixth place in the championship, he was widely expected to head for the top. If you describe competing in F1 with Osella, Coloni and AGS as 'the top', then he did, but what few could have guessed was that he would then become a superstar of touring car racing.

Now, at the grand old age of 59, Tarquini is finally hanging up his trademark Spiderman helmet. The curly hair has long gone, but the

“He took to the BTCC like a duck to water, and everybody loved him. He was so upbeat”

ready smile and charm, wirey build and competitive instinct are as evident as ever. Remarkably, it's 12 years now since, aged 47, he surpassed Juan Manuel Fangio's 1957 record of becoming the oldest ever FIA world champion. Amazingly, he eclipsed that nine years later to claim the FIA World Touring Car Cup crown, aged 56. Hyundai, for which he has driven since 2017, has naturally paid fulsome tribute to the great man, but let's look at Tarquini's time in the British Touring Car Championship.

Twenty-seven years ago, the factory Alfa Romeo team arrived on UK shores with the 155 TS, a car that had sledgehammered its way through the homologation loopholes and massively shifted the aerodynamic goalposts. Tarquini was instrumental in winning over the UK crowds as he waltzed to the 1994 BTCC title. “I didn't really know much about him or his reputation, and like a lot of people I was

probably rather dismissive,” relates long-time BTCC series boss Alan Gow. “What does he know about touring cars in this country? What does he know about the tracks? How wrong can you be?”

“He took to the BTCC like a duck to water, and everybody loved him. The crowds loved him, the media loved him, and actually all of the other drivers loved him. His personality – he was so upbeat, such a good bloke to have in the championship.”

Gow is right about the media. We loved how, via his broken English, he would profess his enjoyment of “the quickly corners” on the UK circuits, particularly Brands Hatch's “Dinga Donga Dell”. He's an avid football fan too and, while trying to get his tongue around a side from South London that was flying high at the time in the top flight of the English game, he would pronounce them “Wimbly Don”. His beautifully mellifluous speech even turned our national series' clunky ‘BTCC’ acronym into the ‘Bitisisi’.

“Later on I organised the BTCC legends race at Donington [in 2004],” continues Gow, “where they all came back to do a SEAT Cupra race, and Gabriele couldn't have said ‘yes’ faster. He just loved the idea of coming back to the UK and doing a race with all his peers in front of the BTCC crowd. That's just his natural enthusiasm and the real liking he had for the UK. He never asked me to pay his air fare, as other drivers did. ‘Just tell me where and when you want me to be.’”

When Tarquini moved to Honda for 1997, James Thompson was his team-mate, and would go on to partner him at Alfa and SEAT in the WTCC. “I'd come from being at Vauxhall with John Cleland, as the number two, a different environment,” says Thompson. “I love John now, but when you're his team-mate he's ruthless... I was frosty and young, and we'd had our first tests and been evenly matched. We shared a hire car to Thruxton, and stopped at a Little Chef for a bite to eat, which for an Italian was probably the worst place! While we were eating, he said, ‘James, you're really fast, I'm a British champion. If you're faster than me sometimes, that's OK. If I'm faster than you sometimes, that's OK.’ Utter confidence. It was just a lovely environment because we both relished the challenge. If either of us was quicker than the other, we'd say, ‘Well done mate’.

“My motorsport career was so much better for having him as a team-mate and as a friend. He's always been an inspiration.”

Through his role as president of the FIA World Touring Car Commission, Gow has kept in touch with Tarquini. “When I saw him a couple of years ago at a World Touring Car Cup round he was proudly showing me a helmet he'd had done,” laughs the Australian. “When you looked at it very closely, in the spider lines were the names of all the championships he'd won. I was looking all over it, and said, ‘Where the bloody hell is the BTCC?’ He was so embarrassed and had to have it remade. All that weekend he just kept apologising to me!”

MEXICO MAGIC FOR MAX EXTENDS HIS LEAD

*Mercedes locked out the front row, but there was no stopping
Max Verstappen and Red Bull in the race — and now
Lewis Hamilton is 19 points behind*

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

PHOTOGRAPHY RED BULL AND



motorsport
IMAGES





Standing tall:
victor Verstappen
acknowledges the
Mexico City crowd



FIA Formula 1
World Champion



BWT
BEST WATER TECHNOLOGY

BWT
CHANGE THE WORLD
sip by



FIA Formula 1
World Champion



BWT



Mobil 1



Tezos



PIRELLI

Some motorsport moments are just magic. Bits of driving that are just spinetingly good, showcasing supreme skill, flair and sheer bloody-mindedness. Max Verstappen's start to the 2021 Mexican Grand Prix had it all. So much of what the Dutchman displayed last Sunday at the Autodromo Hermanos Rodriguez on his way to victory was brilliant, but his breathtaking double pass on the Mercedes drivers will surely be what lives longest in Formula 1's collective memory. Doubly so if, whisper it, this for-the-ages campaign ends in a championship victory...

The whole Mexico City weekend was about Verstappen's Red Bull squad, really. The team that was expected to be in command thanks to the track's high altitude and high-downforce requirements had badly underperformed in qualifying. Getting caught out on the temperamental soft tyres as temperatures climbed in Q3 was its main failing, but it, and sister squad AlphaTauri, also badly messed up the tow game (for everyone except the majestic Pierre Gasly). But Red Bull hit back on race day.

And it did so at the precise moment that Mercedes — which had shocked itself with its front row lockout, Valtteri Bottas heading Verstappen's title rival Lewis Hamilton — knew it was most vulnerable. This was the run to the Turn 1 braking point — the longest of the season.

The Mercedes duo had vowed to work as a team to keep Verstappen behind when the lights went out, but a positive here actually became a negative for the Black Arrows. "Lewis got a better jump than Valtteri," Mercedes director of trackside engineering Andrew Shovlin explained. "None of the actual launches were bad at all, but Lewis got a good jump and that put him alongside, so he was then unable to tow from Valtteri."

Verstappen was the grateful recipient of that slipstream. For all of Red Bull team boss Christian Horner's later assertions that "it transpired being on the second row was actually probably the best place to be starting this race", he still had a lot to do, which he surely wouldn't have chosen coming into the weekend — at a place where the tow effect is limited anyway.

Horner hailed Bottas's actions next as those of a driver who "played fair", with the Finn not trying to block Verstappen's run to the left once he'd shot up the back of the polesitter's rear wing. In fact, Bottas's main move off the line actually brought him close to the faster-starting Hamilton, left with nowhere else to go but the inside since he "was



Bottas sends up a cloud of tyre smoke after being tipped into a spin by Ricciardo



Verstappen steals the lead with late-braking masterclass aided by his car's superior downforce

REDBULL

“ONCE HE WAS ALONGSIDE BOTTAS, VERSTAPPEN PULLED OFF ONE OF THE MOVES OF THE SEASON”

trying to keep whichever Red Bull I could see in my mirror behind”. The world champion rued his team-mate’s split-second decision-making, feeling Bottas “left the door open for Max”.

Once he was alongside Bottas, Verstappen pulled off one of the moves of the season when the pack eventually barrelled into the Turn 1 braking zone. He stayed off the brakes longer than his rivals, swept in imperiously at incredible speed, and yet kept enough of his car on the right side of the exit line to seize the lead.

Horner suggested Verstappen had “rehearsed it in his mind” by braking “right there” on his reconnaissance lap ahead of the start. But his charge insisted “you can’t really practise how a start is going to go, because you end up left, middle, right – depending on what happens”.

What did happen, from Verstappen’s perspective of his move and the point where his rivals braked, was this: “Once I was on the outside and basically on the racing line, I knew exactly where I was going to brake. It’s always a tricky one, especially [for] the car on the inside [that] is

fully into the dirt because nobody is really driving there [usually]. So, they can never brake as late as the car on the outside, also because of the angle going into the corner.

“I knew where I was braking that was really on the edge, because you could see I was also getting close to the white line on the exit. I just went for it, and it worked.”

He was able to pull off his brilliant move because of exactly why Red Bull had the faster package compared to Mercedes last weekend. For once in Mexico, it wasn’t due to Honda’s high-altitude power prowess. “I don’t think there’s any advantage at altitude anymore,” said Horner, acknowledging how Mercedes has optimised its engine to need less cooling in such conditions since 2019.

It was all about downforce. The RB16B has long had the edge on the W12 in this critical consideration, but Red Bull also has a slightly bigger maximum-downforce rear wing to bolt on in Monaco, in Hungary and here in Mexico, where the thin air requires the full might of every team’s aerodynamics. And Mercedes just doesn’t have a max-downforce rear wing to match its rival’s.

So, Verstappen used that advantage to be able to jump on the brakes much later than Bottas and Hamilton to his inside, knowing that he’d have the grip to make the move stick from the racing line. Plus, the front-row starters were also weaker here for a second key reason.

Both Hamilton and Bottas had been locking up and going off the >>



road here throughout practice, with the world champion earning a reprimand in FP1 for not going left around the bollard far behind Turn 2. This rule was superseded by an instruction from race director Michael Masi on race day, which allowed the drivers to cut Turn 2 and rejoin immediately, but only at the start or a subsequent standing-start restart.

Hamilton acknowledged that the Turn 1 braking zone had been “an issue for me all weekend – I went on twice in Turn 1 through practice, qualifying – locking [up]”. He added: “Just our car, for some reason, this weekend has been quite poor in that area and that’s a particular area in which they’re a lot stronger than us. Of course, when you put more load on the car, it does help, but we couldn’t match them load-wise in terms of wing setting this weekend.”

Verstappen led Hamilton into Turn 2, which was basically as close as the world champion really got for the rest of the afternoon. Proceedings were soon interrupted because, as they were racing through the second corner, Bottas had been tipped into a spin at the Turn 1 apex by McLaren’s fast-starting Daniel Ricciardo. This triggered scenes of chaos as the pack avoided the tyre-

smoking, spun Mercedes, many drivers legally (in light of Masi’s late instructions) cutting Turns 2 and 3. In doing so, this set off a chain of events that led to Yuki Tsunoda and Mick Schumacher sandwiching Esteban Ocon and both immediately getting enough damage clattering the Alpine to force their retirements. Ocon was able to scamper on.

The safety car was required while the track was cleared, which meant Verstappen had a restart to deal with. And he aced that as well, dropping Hamilton as they accelerated out of the stadium section to resume racing at the start of lap five of 71, the leader already ahead by 0.9 seconds when they crossed the line with the green flags flying.

And from there, Verstappen just checked out. Without needing to worry about the soft tyres that had undone Red Bull in Q3 thanks

“MERCEDES KNEW ITS MAIN THREAT TO MAXIMISING ITS RESULT WAS GOING TO COME FROM PEREZ”



Bottas endured
fruitless 32-lap
pursuit of Ricciardo

COATES

to all the leaders traversing Q2 as expected on the mediums, his pace was in happier territory with the yellow-walled rubber in the opening phase. He quickly went down to the 1m21s bracket compared to Hamilton initially struggling to leave the 1m22s, the Briton and his Mercedes team soon realising he did not have the race day pace to stay with his title rival.

“In the even hotter conditions [in the race] we were struggling a bit more with rear grip,” explained Shovlin, the Red Bull’s extra downforce affording it another vital benefit – it stopped Verstappen sliding around as much, and so kept his rear tyre temperatures under control. That was key for any driver to do well last Sunday, in addition to managing the typical brake and engine cooling requirements the high-altitude setting demands. While doing all of this, Verstappen romped clear by 0.3s per lap in the 24 tours that followed the restart, Hamilton unable to follow him and keep his tyres alive in the heat.



That meant Verstappen's advantage was 9.2s by the start of lap 29. And that point matters, because it was when Hamilton became the first of the leaders to pit.

After Bottas had disappeared from the lead fight and Verstappen hadn't hung around, Mercedes knew the main threat to maximising its result was going to come from Sergio Perez. The home hero had tracked Hamilton on the run to the first corner but didn't get a chance to try a move up the inside because he was being overcome by Ricciardo – the McLaren driver then locked his fronts heavily, got back off and on the brakes with better control, then tapped Bottas as he was still too fast at the apex to avoid anyone coming across, as indeed was the Merc.

Perez cut Turn 2 and loudly protested his innocence – not that it mattered given Masi's directive. After the restart he fell back from Hamilton, but was never more than 3.4s adrift in the phase that followed, which gave Mercedes a headache, made worse by having only one car left in the lead battle. "Once we could see that Max clearly had the legs on Lewis and that Perez was also able to keep up, we kind of shifted our focus," said Shovlin. "[That was] making sure we didn't lose P2 rather than trying to achieve the impossible with Max – because it was pretty clear that it was not a day that we had a car to win."

Perez's engineer, Hugh Bird, had been urging his driver to cut the gap to Hamilton and, when he got back within around 1.5s at the end of lap 28, Mercedes acted – it brought Hamilton in next time by to ward off the undercut threat, just as the pair were approaching a gaggle of backmarkers.

The world champion rejoined on the hards after a 2.4s stop, with Red Bull soon moving to send Perez long in a bid to gain a significant tyre-life-offset advantage for the closing stages – what Mercedes had done against Verstappen two weeks earlier at Austin. The long-gone leader was brought in four laps after Hamilton's stop, his advantage easily maintained.

Red Bull left Perez out until the end of lap 40 before bringing him in for his hards, with the gap to Hamilton at the end of his out-lap 9.6s. That set up a 30-tour charge to try to score a Red Bull 1-2.

Mercedes thought Perez would be in striking distance by the very end of the race, but he gained so quickly on Hamilton that he was in >>

QUALIFYING



Qualifying in Mexico City ended with a shock result that was the flipside of the same phenomenon at Austin. Red Bull had dominated the practice standings since Mercedes had swept FP1. In Q1 and Q2, there was little to suggest its advantage was about to disappear. Yes, Valtteri Bottas topped the first segment and Lewis Hamilton the second – where the frontrunners switching to the mediums inevitably means a slightly different balance – but they had done more runs than Max Verstappen.

But it all went wrong for Red Bull in Q3. On the first runs, Verstappen found "we were just really slow and just [had] terrible grip", as evidenced by his big oversteer snap exiting the slow, double-apex Turn 6 right. His 1m16.225s was 0.350s down on Bottas's 1m15.875s.

At Mercedes, Bottas wasn't entertaining his team's attempts to convince him to make some further set-up changes as, crucially, the track temperatures had risen four degrees since FP3. "He said, 'No, not changing, not changing, not changing,'" related team boss Toto Wolff. This led to his 0.145s gap to Hamilton. The Briton felt the changes Mercedes plumped for on his car meant he "really struggled".

Chaos reigned on the second runs. Not at Mercedes, where neither driver improved. Bottas, whose 1m15.967s was actually good enough to keep him ahead of Hamilton in any case, felt his early efforts to shave time off his previous best meant he "had a bit more rear overheating so lost a bit of traction in the final sector".

But at Red Bull, which this time had got Verstappen into Perez's tow (passing Carlos Sainz Jr ahead of the first runs meant he'd missed the slipstream before), everything imploded. Both drivers set personal bests in sector one but were still

down on Bottas. Then they came upon Yuki Tsunoda in the runoff beyond the Turn 10 fast-right swoop. Perez claimed a sudden lack of downforce meant he went off too, while Verstappen spotted their dust and lifted in anticipation of a yellow flag that never came. He stayed on it after that, but a lock-up at Turn 13 in the stadium meant he didn't improve.

It was mess, caused by Red Bull and AlphaTauri playing tow games (the penalty-addled Tsunoda helping Pierre Gasly, who qualified an excellent fifth, down the main straight) and Tsunoda going a touch too slowly on his in-lap before suddenly trying to move out of his stablemates' way. Red Bull was left to rue its procedures, as Verstappen felt even its out-lap tactics needed questioning due to the difference he'd felt in the critical tyre warm-up phases on each Q3 run.

"BOTTAS WASN'T ENTERTAINING HIS TEAM'S ATTEMPTS TO CONVINCE HIM TO MAKE FURTHER SET-UP CHANGES"



DRS range by lap 61, his pace 0.46s per lap better while getting there on his much younger white-walled rubber. But, as was the case for Hamilton in the USA, albeit with much longer left to run for Perez's chances to make a pass this time around, getting to the back of his rival stalled the Mexican's charge.

"If you exit the last corner well, it's very difficult to launch an attack," Shovlin explained. "These cars are quite difficult to follow when you're on a hot circuit, the overheating makes it awkward. We were perhaps grateful of that effect with Lewis, because Sergio had a better car."

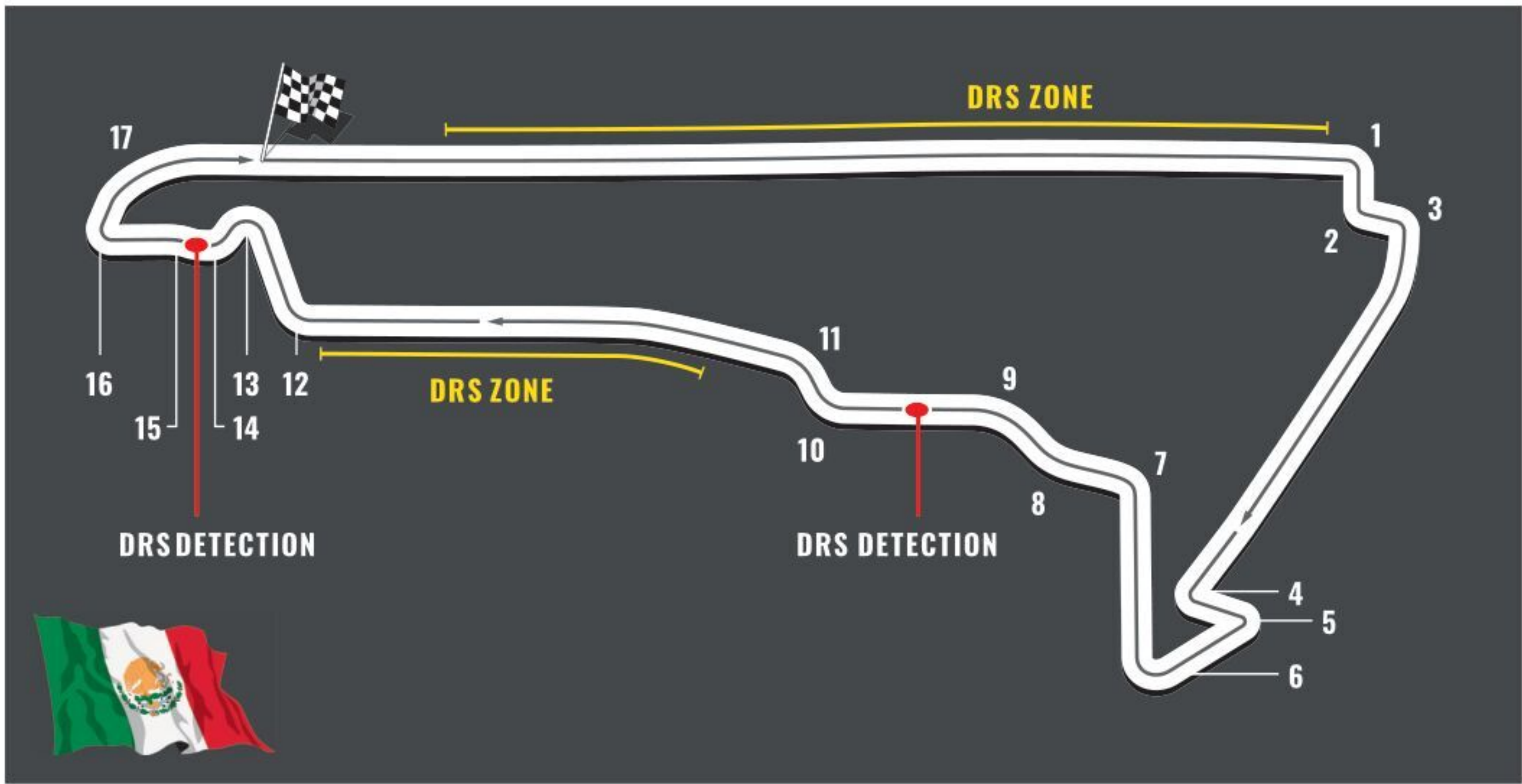
There was also the traffic factor, which at various points helped and hindered Hamilton. Just before Perez got into DRS range, Hamilton had come up behind Lando Norris and soon reported that his tyres

were "getting hot" in the McLaren's wake – while he was still too far behind to trigger blue flags, saying "it's crazy I can't get close". But after two and a half laps he was finally waved by, after which he closed in to lap George Russell (for the second time) and Fernando Alonso. The time spent passing this duo this time cost Perez.

It all added up to Perez being 2.1s back with five laps left to run and, although he recovered back to under a second at the start of the penultimate tour, he never got beyond having a speculative last-lap look from very far back heading into the Turn 4 left at the end of the second straight.

"We didn't have really much left on the tyres at the end but where there's a will, there's a way," Hamilton reflected. "We

TRACK





managed to just keep them behind. One more lap, I think it would have been over, but I'm happy that I still got second."

He also picked up one other minor late glimmer thanks to Bottas. The Finn had engaged in a 32-lap pursuit of Ricciardo after dropping behind his Turn 1 nemesis when catching a slide passing the rejoining Lance Stroll at Turn 6 following the safety car restart. No matter what he tried, for the reasons Shovlin outlined previously, plus having to work to cool his brakes, he couldn't repass the Australian, who had lost his front wing in the first-corner fracas.

Bottas might have got past with a second stop overcut attempt on lap 40, but was left stationary for 11.7s as Mercedes "couldn't get the wheel off once we'd undone the nut", said Shovlin, because "something

"WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH LEFT ON THE TYRES AT THE END, BUT WHERE THERE'S A WILL, THERE'S A WAY"



Perez delighted to score a podium at home – but could he have gone one better?

had got caught there". He therefore rejoined three places back from Ricciardo with no hope of gaining points himself, so Mercedes opted to use him to take them off Verstappen.

The leader had been briefly freed from his lift-and-coast demands on lap 52, at which point he pumped in a 1m18.999s. This was what Bottas was aiming for when he rejoined from a third stop, now on the soft tyres. But he actually came out directly behind Verstappen, who quickly spotted what was happening and took measures to try to spoil Bottas's flying lap attempt.

On lap 67, Verstappen backed off by nearly 3s compared to the previous tour and then let Bottas ahead running onto the pitstraight. Then he raced after him to activate blue flags and ruin another fastest lap attempt, then being allowed back ahead at the start of lap 69. Cunning, if a silly consequence of a silly rule.

"We were side by side, but it was all good," said Verstappen. "We lost a lot of time, but it was all right, to be honest, for me. I know Valtteri, he's a clean driver anyway and I was never [thinking] that something would happen."

Mercedes acted again by pitting Bottas for a fourth time to get him away from Verstappen at the end of the race's 69th lap, holding him in his pitbox to ensure he'd have plenty of free air into which he could then charge. That he did, setting the race's fastest lap with a 1m17.774s on Verstappen's final tour. As Bottas finished a twice-lapped 15th, no bonus point was awarded.

Verstappen therefore didn't have everything go as he ultimately wanted last Sunday but, considering the flap Red Bull had got itself into on Saturday, it was a critical win. And one that will always be remembered for his sterling start, something he hailed afterwards.

"It was crucial for me to get ahead there," Verstappen said. "I could just do my own pace from there onward." ❧

NEXT F1 REPORT

SAO PAULO GRAND PRIX 18 NOVEMBER ISSUE

Can Hamilton and Mercedes fight back in Brazil and put the brakes on Verstappen's championship charge?

GASLY STARS TO BEAT FERRARI DUO

Pierre Gasly starred to finish best-of-the-rest with what he called a “lonely” fourth place in Mexico City, keeping clear of both Ferraris despite their strategy-switch attack.

After qualifying fifth behind the Mercedes and Red Bulls, aided by a tow from AlphaTauri team-mate Yuki Tsunoda, Gasly avoided the first-corner tangle to move up to fourth. Then he effectively held station until the chequered flag to take his best result since September’s Dutch Grand Prix.

In a race notable for its lack of action, Gasly only had to be mindful of Ferrari’s late threat when it switched Charles Leclerc, struggling on the hard tyres in the second stint, and Carlos Sainz Jr, who had run long in the first stint, to allow the Spaniard to try to close with his fresher hard rubber. But Gasly kept comfortably clear to seal fourth and therefore pulled AlphaTauri level on points with Alpine in fifth place in the constructors’ championship, as the French manufacturer had a difficult event overall at a venue that did not suit its package.

“It was the perfect weekend,” Gasly said. “The pace was good from the first laps to the end.”

Despite not catching Gasly, Leclerc was still content with Ferrari’s healthy points haul as it passed constructors’ rival McLaren. “[Gasly’s] pace was quite a surprise,” said Leclerc, who was ordered back past Sainz with two laps to go to lead him home in fifth.



COATES



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AlphaTauri defends Tsunoda

AlphaTauri team boss Franz Tost defended Yuki Tsunoda after the rookie got caught up in late Q3 drama when the Red Bull teams’ tow tactics backfired for the main squad.

Tsunoda, who along with Lando Norris, Esteban Ocon and Lance Stroll took grid penalties for getting new engines in Mexico City, was towing team-mate Pierre Gasly throughout qualifying, with Norris doing likewise for Daniel Ricciardo. Red Bull was also getting Sergio Perez to run in front of Max Verstappen, albeit with the Mexican completing his own flier ahead of his team-mate.

On the final Q3 runs, the McLarens and AlphaTauris led the pack, with Tsunoda having a 12-second gap to Carlos Sainz Jr and then the Red Bull duo once he’d pulled over after giving Gasly a tow down the main straight. The Japanese followed his normal in-lap procedure with his engine turned down, according to his team, but his offset run plan meant the Red Bulls were bearing down when he reached the Turn 10 fast right swoop.

He dived off track ahead of Perez,

who felt the disturbance caused a “lack of downforce” that put him off too. Behind, Verstappen spotted the dust they kicked up and lifted, wary of the yellow-flag rules that cost him pole when he didn’t lift for Valtteri Bottas crashing in Mexico in 2019. The Dutchman could not improve his Q3 personal best thereafter and qualified third.

Red Bull team boss Christian Horner told TV crews afterwards: “I think we got ‘Tsunoda’d’. I don’t understand why he was just cruising around at that part of the circuit.”

But Tost responded: “We told him on the radio that the Red Bulls are coming and he just went off the track so they could pass easily and Perez followed him. It is not Yuki’s fault. He didn’t make a mistake, he did it deliberately. I don’t understand anything about this.”

Tsunoda was not investigated over the incident — and no yellow flag was shown. He qualified ninth but started 17th with his grid penalty. In the first-corner commotion he was clipped by Ocon and retired immediately.

BIG NUMBER

19

Max Verstappen’s lead over Lewis Hamilton at the top of the 2021 drivers’ standings – the largest advantage for either contender since the Dutchman led by 32 points after winning the second Austria race. Valtteri Bottas is also now on 19 F1 poles – the most for a driver without a world title.



COATES

Q&A

FERNANDO ALONSO ALPINE DRIVER

How do you summarise your weekend?

Happy with the two points. Obviously, it was a tough weekend. We were not maybe as competitive as we were hoping for. And then in qualifying I didn't put a good lap in. I was not very proud of my driving [on Saturday]. So I had the opportunity to do a better race and I think it was well executed by everyone in the team. Scoring points even on a difficult weekend proves that we are very solid on Sundays. I'm happy for this.

How was it coming across Bottas's spin at Turn 2?



SUTTON

It was scary for sure. I think for Sebastian [Vettel] and myself, we were both on the right side and it was not the best decision [to cut inside Bottas]. But luckily, we [kept] our car safe and we

continued more or less in the same positions as we started. You always want to gain some positions for free, if possible. It was not a surprise because we know how tricky that first corner is.

How was your early battle with Russell?

Nothing wrong with that – always clean driving, a lot of respect to each other. It was good. But I think they were very uncompetitive in the race, so it was not too difficult

to pass. And I was surprised – I think I lapped the Williams eventually in the race. So it is a bit strange. In qualifying, they are very fast, sometimes even faster than us. And then in the race they finish one lap behind. So, we also need to understand that.

Were you surprised at AlphaTauri's pace?

Well, we know that performance-wise AlphaTauri has been outstanding in some of the races. And in some others, I think we have just been lucky to score points, others I think as a team we were better. Maybe we have not the level of competitiveness or we don't have the speed of the AlphaTauri car. It will be a close battle [in the constructors' championship] until Abu Dhabi.



COATES

GIOVINAZZI HITS OUT AT 'WRONG' STRATEGY

Antonio Giovinazzi saw the chance to score his first points since Monaco in May slip away after Alfa Romeo pitted him early only for the Italian to emerge into traffic, which allowed Aston Martin's Sebastian Vettel to profit.

Giovinazzi, whose Formula 1 future looks set to be decided during the Sao Paulo GP this weekend, benefited from the first-corner drama to leap from 11th to sixth place. Despite losing a spot to Carlos Sainz Jr at the safety car restart, he was then well positioned for a healthy points haul. But his lap 16 stop dropped him behind the recovering Daniel Ricciardo and Valtteri Bottas, which meant Vettel, Kimi Raikkonen and Fernando Alonso were able to extend their first stints and overcut ahead.

Giovinazzi's pain was compounded when he lost 10th place to Lando Norris, who had started at the back due to an engine penalty. After finishing in 11th place for a third consecutive race, Giovinazzi, who slid off and hit the barriers entering the stadium section late in Q2, did not hide his frustration at Alfa's strategy post-race.

"I'm really disappointed because we had the chance to score points with two cars," he said. "But on my side, the strategy was completely wrong. We pitted too early, but I don't think [that] was the issue. The issue was that when I came out, I was in traffic. The strategy didn't work."



SUTTON

'Probably toughest race of the year' for Russell and Williams

Williams's George Russell called the 2021 Mexican Grand Prix "probably our toughest race of the year" after he fell from ninth behind the safety car to finish 16th, two laps down.

Russell reached Q2 after considerable practice disruption from two damaged gearboxes, including the one he was supposed to race, which meant he dropped five places on the grid for taking a new one. He rose up the order at the start, where he

hit the wingless Daniel Ricciardo at Turn 6 further around lap one.

During the safety car, Russell "peered over the cockpit to check the front wing and in doing so I pulled my drinks tube out". After the restart he battled rivals defensively but fell steadily down the order as the Williams required considerable management to cool its brakes and engine, as well as keep its tyres alive – limitations that also held back Nicholas Latifi (17th).



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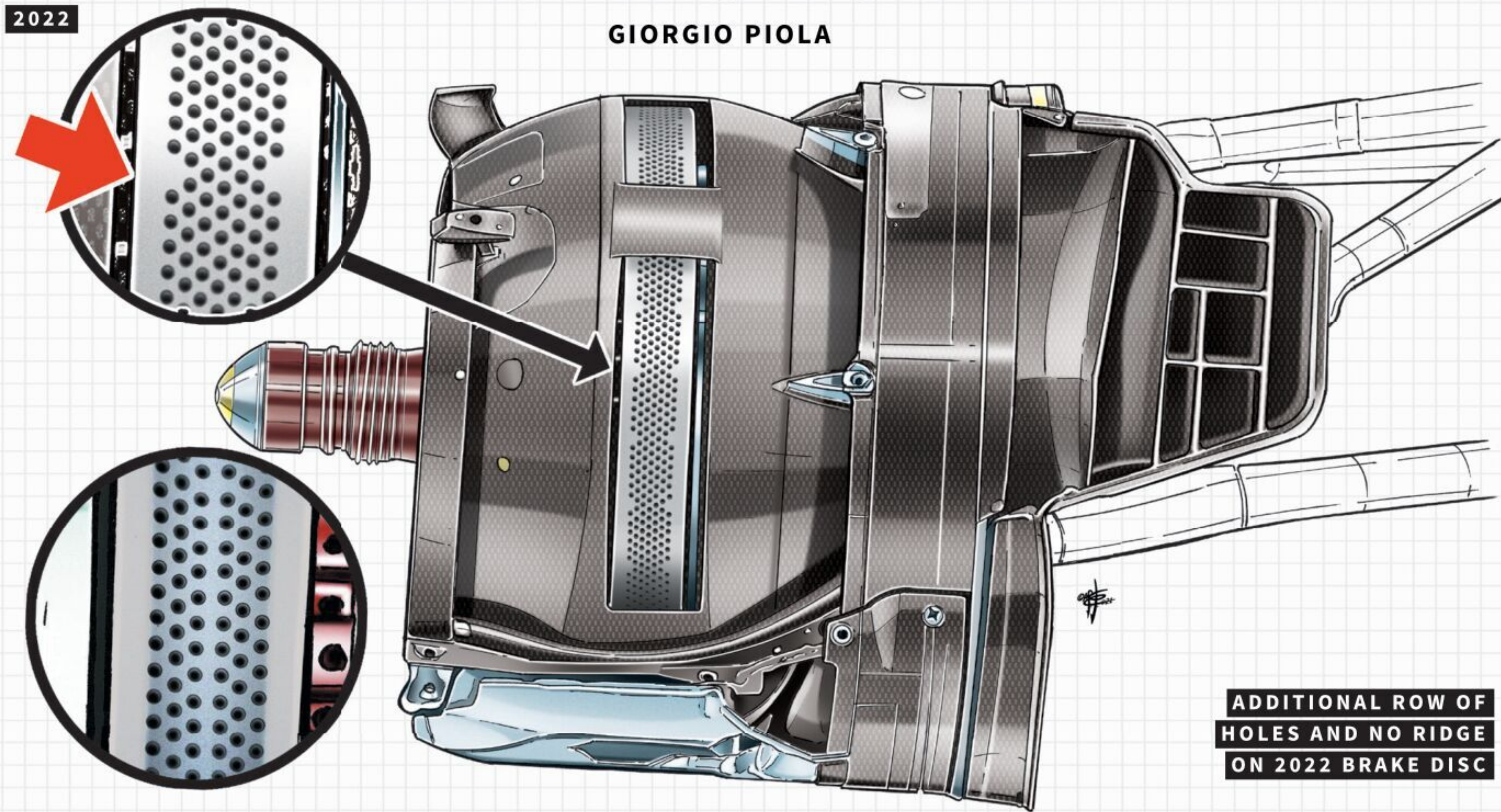
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DRAWING BOARD

GIORGIO PIOLA

2022



ADDITIONAL ROW OF HOLES AND NO RIDGE ON 2022 BRAKE DISC

FERRARI TRIES 2022 STOPPING POWER

Given the scale of the 2022 Formula 1 rule changes, it's incredibly hard to test next year's parts on the current cars in preparation as the aerodynamic profile will be completely different. The only real chance to put the legwork in for next season is by testing new components that sit under the skin, and Ferrari explored a new front brake disc design in practice in Mexico.

The cooling requirements of the brakes will

change with the addition of wheel covers next season, so dissipating heat will potentially prove more difficult. Currently, a number of teams opt for a ridged circumference to the disc to increase the surface area (inset bottom) and allow for more heat to be released. But Ferrari's exploratory 2022 disc has been produced without the ridge and replaces that with another row of holes, taking it up to seven rows.

It is possible that the extra holes add a further increase to the exposed surface area of the brake disc, and thus yield the requisite cooling for next year. This will be a key area of focus and, although the wheel covers will provide some change in effect, the shift to 18-inch wheels for next year will require more braking power too.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

THE PROS AND CONS OF MEXICO'S THIN AIR

Although exploration for 2022 is under way, teams still have to optimise their packages in the final few races this season to end 2021 on a high. Red Bull has its biggest

chance of earning a title for the first time since 2013, so the pressure to keep some degree of development going is particularly huge.

Mexico, owing to the higher

altitude, looked set to play into Red Bull's hands; Mexico City's position of 2240 metres above sea level cuts the air density by 22%, meaning the RB16B is less pegged back by

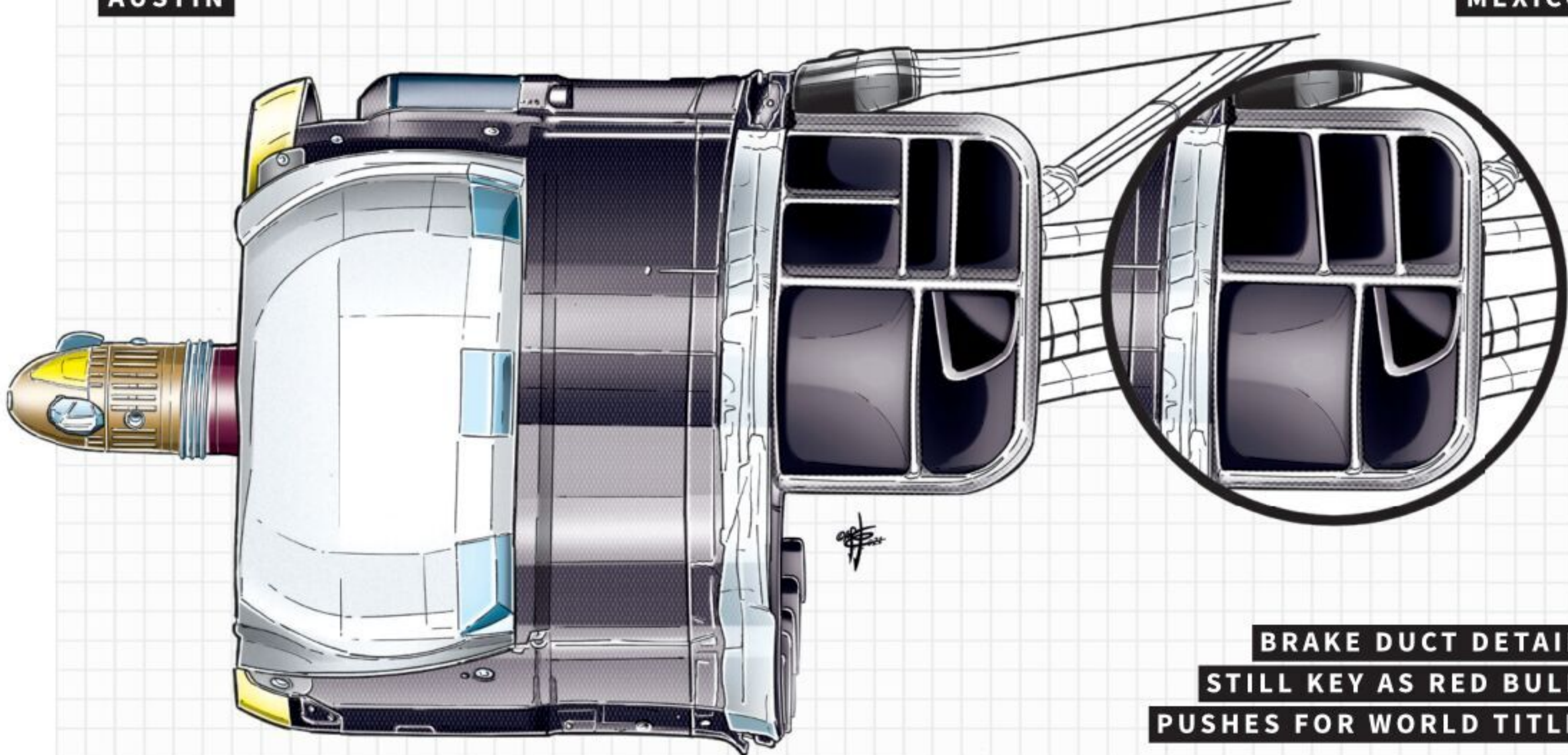
drag. The Honda turbo featuring aviation-inspired turbine technology was certainly part of the Milton Keynes team's arsenal. But the reduced air density also affects brake cooling, as the mass flow rate of air is reduced at altitude, thus giving Red Bull reason to open up the front brake ducts even further to offset that loss.

Compared to the Austin ducts (left), the top left opening (inset) has lost the rib in between, increasing the inlet size. The two upper ribs at the top have been slanted inwards to recapture any flow-conditioning effects lost with the removed element. Teams also dealt with the reduced cooling to the engine by opening up the rear of the car to help eject any excess heat.

JAKE BOXALL-LEGGE

AUSTIN

MEXICO



BRAKE DUCT DETAIL STILL KEY AS RED BULL PUSHES FOR WORLD TITLE



FREE PRACTICE 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m18.341s
2	Hamilton	1m18.417s
3	Verstappen	1m18.464s
4	Perez	1m18.610s
5	Gasly	1m18.985s
6	Sainz	1m19.463s
7	Alonso	1m19.656s
8	Leclerc	1m19.667s
9	Ocon	1m19.759s
10	Vettel	1m19.858s
11	Tsunoda	1m20.011s
12	Raikkonen	1m20.026s
13	Stroll	1m20.030s
14	Ricciardo	1m20.273s
15	Norris	1m20.301s
16	Giovinazzi	1m20.344s
17	Russell	1m20.517s
18	Latifi	1m21.580s
19	Schumacher	1m22.144s
20	Mazepin	1m22.819s

WEATHER Sunny, air 15-20C track 31-43C

FREE PRACTICE 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Verstappen	1m17.301s
2	Bottas	1m17.725s
3	Hamilton	1m17.810s
4	Perez	1m17.871s
5	Sainz	1m18.318s
6	Gasly	1m18.429s
7	Leclerc	1m18.605s
8	Tsunoda	1m18.644s
9	Vettel	1m18.681s
10	Alonso	1m18.732s
11	Raikkonen	1m18.841s
12	Norris	1m18.979s
13	Giovinazzi	1m19.227s
14	Ocon	1m19.431s
15	Ricciardo	1m19.521s
16	Schumacher	1m19.620s
17	Stroll	1m19.730s
18	Latifi	1m20.820s
19	Mazepin	1m21.581s
20	Russell	notime

WEATHER Sunny, air 20-22C track 38-45C

FREE PRACTICE 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Perez	1m17.024s
2	Verstappen	1m17.217s
3	Hamilton	1m17.675s
4	Bottas	1m17.708s
5	Sainz	1m18.029s
6	Tsunoda	1m18.037s
7	Ricciardo	1m18.121s
8	Gasly	1m18.202s
9	Leclerc	1m18.213s
10	Norris	1m18.312s
11	Stroll	1m18.352s
12	Raikkonen	1m18.531s
13	Giovinazzi	1m18.556s
14	Vettel	1m18.614s
15	Alonso	1m18.847s
16	Ocon	1m18.999s
17	Russell	1m19.211s
18	Schumacher	1m19.238s
19	Latifi	1m19.313s
20	Mazepin	1m20.479s

WEATHER Sunny, air 17-18C track 35-40C

SEASON STATS

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS	BEST FINISH	BEST QUAL
1 Verstappen	312.5	1	1
2 Hamilton	293.5	1	1
3 Bottas	185	1	1
4 Perez	165	1	2
5 Norris	150	2	1
6 Leclerc	138	2	1
7 Sainz	130.5	2	2
8 Ricciardo	105	1	4
9 Gasly	86	3	4
10 Alonso	60	4	6
11 Ocon	46	1	5
12 Vettel	42	2	5
13 Stroll	26	7	8
14 Tsunoda	20	6	7
15 Russell	16	2	2
16 Raikkonen	10	8	12
17 Latifi	7	7	12
18 Giovinazzi	1	10	7
19 Schumacher	0	12	14
20 Kubica	0	14	18
21 Mazepin	0	14	18

CONSTRUCTORS' CHAMPIONSHIP	PTS
1 Mercedes	478.5
2 Red Bull	477.5
3 Ferrari	268.5
4 McLaren	255
5 Alpine	106
6 AlphaTauri	106
7 Aston Martin	68
8 Williams	23
9 Alfa Romeo	11
10 Haas	0

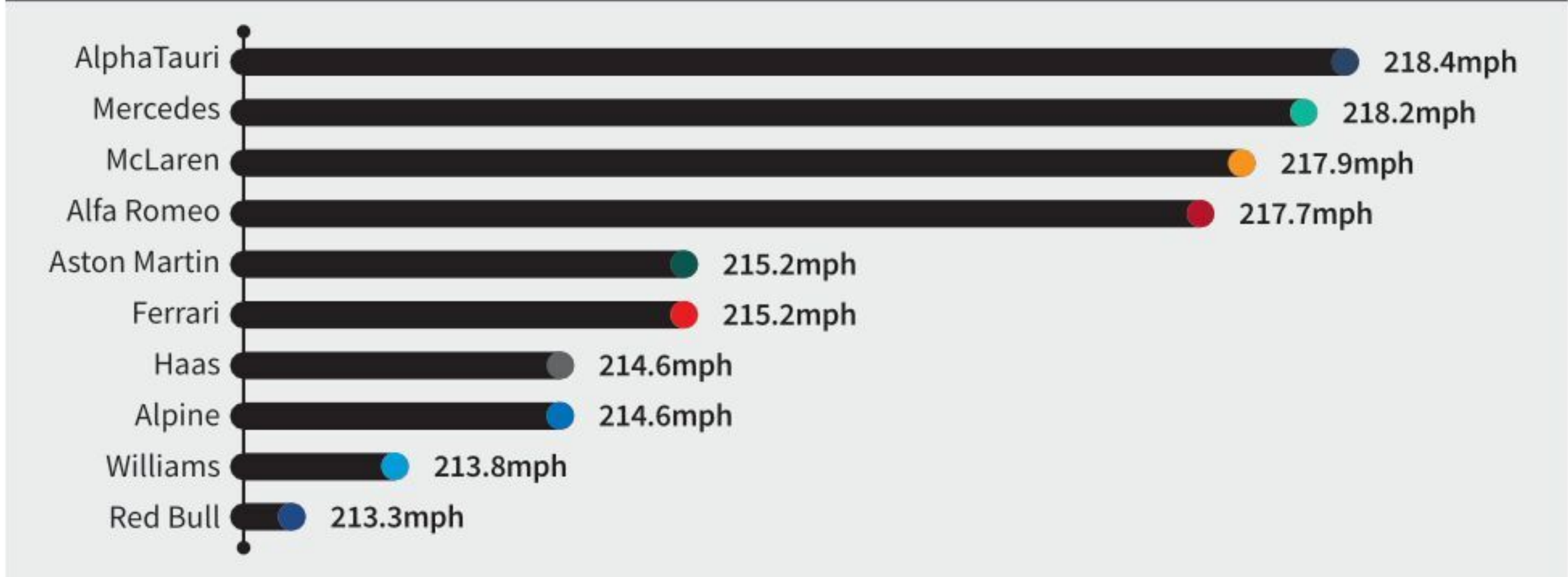
QUALIFYING BATTLE	Driver	Pos	Driver	Pos
Hamilton	13	5	Bottas	
Perez	1	16	Verstappen	
Ricciardo	6	11	Norris	
Vettel	11	7	Stroll	
Alonso	9	8	Ocon	
Leclerc	12	5	Sainz	
Gasly	17	0	Tsunoda	
Raikkonen	5	11	Giovinazzi	
Kubica	0	2	Giovinazzi	
Mazepin	2	16	Schumacher	
Latifi	0	17	Russell	

Based on Q1/Q2/Q3 sessions, not sprint races.
Events removed when one driver is a team could not participate for reasons outside their control

WINS	POLE POSITIONS
Verstappen 9	Verstappen 7
Hamilton 5	Hamilton 5
Bottas 1	Bottas 3
Ocon 1	Leclerc 2
Perez 1	Norris 1
Ricciardo 1	

Poles taken based on qualifying, not sprint races or grid penalties (official F1 scores would be Verstappen 9, Hamilton 3)

SPEED TRAP (QUALIFYING)



QUALIFYING 1

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m16.727s
2	Leclerc	1m16.748s
3	Verstappen	1m16.788s
4	Gasly	1m16.908s
5	Perez	1m17.003s
6	Hamilton	1m17.207s
7	Tsunoda	1m17.330s
8	Vettel	1m17.502s
9	Sainz	1m17.517s
10	Norris	1m17.569s
11	Raikkonen	1m17.606s
12	Ricciardo	1m17.719s
13	Giovinazzi	1m17.897s
14	Russell	1m17.958s
15	Ocon	1m18.126s
16	Alonso	1m18.452s
17	Latifi	1m18.756s
18	Schumacher	1m18.858s
19	Mazepin	1m19.303s
20	Stroll	1m20.873s

QUALIFYING 2

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Hamilton	1m16.474s
2	Verstappen	1m16.483s
3	Tsunoda	1m16.701s
4	Bottas	1m16.864s
5	Gasly	1m16.955s
6	Leclerc	1m17.034s
7	Perez	1m17.055s
8	Ricciardo	1m17.092s
9	Sainz	1m17.248s
10	Norris	1m17.473s
11	Vettel	1m17.746s
12	Raikkonen	1m17.958s
13	Russell	1m18.172s
14	Giovinazzi	1m18.290s
15	Ocon	1m18.405s

QUALIFYING 3

POS	DRIVER	TIME
1	Bottas	1m15.875s
2	Hamilton	1m16.020s
3	Verstappen	1m16.225s
4	Perez	1m16.342s
5	Gasly	1m16.456s
6	Sainz	1m16.761s
7	Ricciardo	1m16.763s
8	Leclerc	1m16.837s
9	Tsunoda	1m17.158s
10	Norris	1m36.830s

WEATHER Sunny, air 20-22C track 42-47C



STARTING GRID

10 Raikkonen #7 1m17.958s	9 Vettel #5 1m17.746s	8 Leclerc #16 1m16.837s	7 Ricciardo #3 1m16.763s	6 Sainz #55 1m16.761s	5 Gasly #10 1m16.456s	4 Perez #11 1m16.342s	3 Verstappen #33 1m16.225s	2 Hamilton #44 1m16.020s	1 Bottas #77 1m15.875s
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RACE RESULTS ROUND 18/22 (71 LAPS - 189.74 MILES)

POS	DRIVER	TEAM	FINISHTIME	LED	TYRES
1	Max Verstappen (NLD)	Red Bull-Honda	1h38m39.086s	65	Mu, Hn
2	Lewis Hamilton (GBR)	Mercedes	+16.555s		Mu, Hn
3	Sergio Perez (MEX)	Red Bull-Honda	+17.752s	6	Mu, Hn
4	Pierre Gasly (FRA)	AlphaTauri-Honda	+1m03.845s		Mu, Hn
5	Charles Leclerc (MCO)	Ferrari	+1m21.037s		Mu, Hn
6	Carlos Sainz Jr (ESP)	Ferrari	-1 lap/+2.430s		Mu, Hn
7	Sebastian Vettel (DEU)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-1 lap/+10.058s		Mu, Hn
8	Kimi Raikkonen (FIN)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+15.159s		Mu, Hn
9	Fernando Alonso (ESP)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+23.689s		Mn, Hn
10	Lando Norris (GBR)	McLaren-Mercedes	-1 lap/+26.226s		Mu, Hn
11	Antonio Giovinazzi (ITA)	Alfa Romeo-Ferrari	-1 lap/+1m00.999s		Mu, Hn
12	Daniel Ricciardo (AUS)	McLaren-Mercedes	-1 lap/+1m01.889s		Mu, Hn, Mu
13	Esteban Ocon (FRA)	Alpine-Renault	-1 lap/+1m13.373s		Sn, Hn
14	Lance Stroll (CAN)	Aston Martin-Mercedes	-2 laps/+7.951s		Mu, Hn, Mu
15	Valtteri Bottas (FIN)	Mercedes	-2 laps/+32.933s		Mu, Hn, Mn, Su, Su
16	George Russell (GBR)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps/+38.802s		Mn, Hn
17	Nicholas Latifi (CAN)	Williams-Mercedes	-2 laps/+53.290s		Mn, Hn, Mu
18	Nikita Mazepin (RUS)	Haas-Ferrari	-3 laps/+47.317s		Mn, Hn, Mu
R	Mick Schumacher (DEU)	Haas-Ferrari	0 laps-collision		Mn
R	Yuki Tsunoda (JPN)	AlphaTauri-Honda	0 laps-collision		Sn

FASTEST LAPS

POS	DRIVER	TIME	GAP	LAP
1	Bottas	1m17.774s	-	69
2	Verstappen	1m18.999s	+1.225s	52
3	Perez	1m19.468s	+1.694s	49
4	Hamilton	1m19.820s	+2.046s	66
5	Sainz	1m20.081s	+2.307s	63
6	Vettel	1m20.460s	+2.686s	70
7	Gasly	1m20.510s	+2.736s	66
8	Norris	1m20.617s	+2.843s	67
9	Leclerc	1m20.665s	+2.891s	63
10	Alonso	1m20.711s	+2.937s	54
11	Raikkonen	1m20.713s	+2.939s	63
12	Stroll	1m20.930s	+3.156s	61
13	Ricciardo	1m21.069s	+3.295s	40
14	Ocon	1m21.348s	+3.574s	67
15	Mazepin	1m21.402s	+3.628s	61
16	Giovinazzi	1m21.523s	+3.749s	68
17	Latifi	1m21.546s	+3.772s	66
18	Russell	1m22.016s	+4.242s	61
-	Schumacher	no time	-	-
-	Tsunoda	no time	-	-

WEATHER Sunny, air 19-23C track 43-49C

WINNER'S AVERAGE SPEED 115.399mph FASTEST LAP AVERAGE SPEED 123.791mph

TYRES

KEY: H - Hard M - Medium S - Soft I - Intermediate W - Wet n - New set u - Used set



RACE BRIEFING

GRID PENALTIES

RUSSELL Five-place penalty for replacement gearbox

TSUNODA Required to start from the back for additional power

elements used

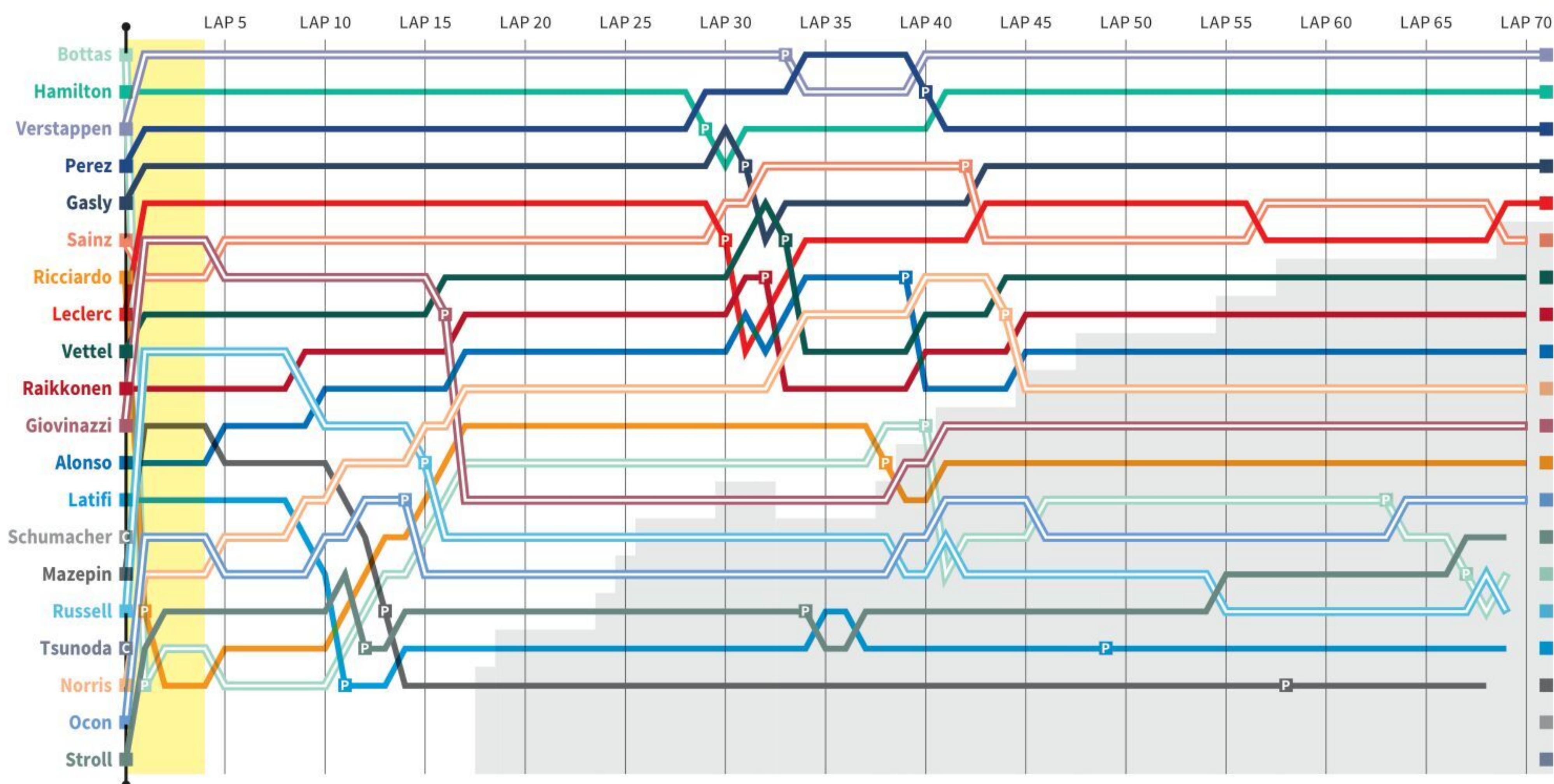
NORRIS Required to start from the back for additional power elements used

OCON Required to start from the back for

additional power elements used

STROLL Required to start from the back for additional power elements used and five-place penalty for replacement gearbox

LAP CHART What happened, when



P Pitstop C Crash M Mechanical failure S Spin H Penalty Car lapped Safety car

GASLY TAKES FULL MARKS WITH A POLISHED PERFORMANCE

The AlphaTauri ace is the sole driver worthy of a perfect 10 in our ratings, while Verstappen, Vettel and Raikkonen are in closest pursuit

ALEX KALINAUCKAS

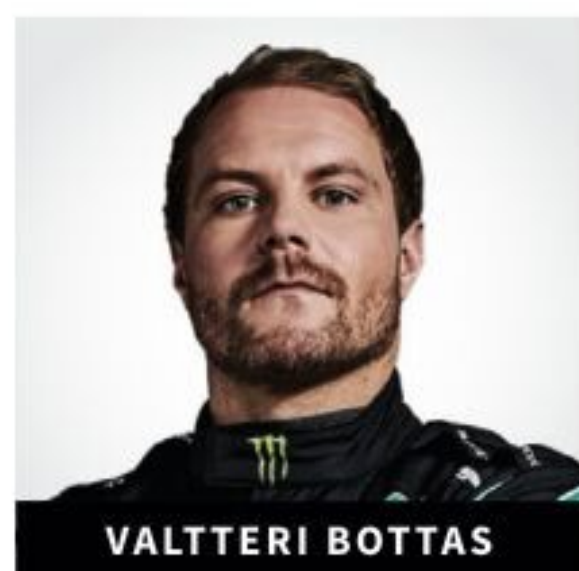
MERCEDES



LEWIS HAMILTON

Started **2nd** — Result **2nd**

8 Can't score higher because of his qualifying defeat to Bottas when pole was there for the taking, but there was little else he could have done in the race. Bizarrely, his better reaction at the lights played a part in Mercedes dropping behind Verstappen as he couldn't get a tow from Bottas.

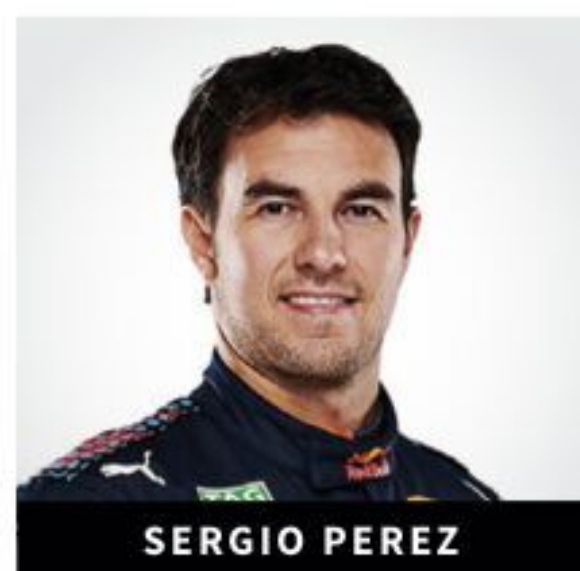


VALTTERI BOTTAS

Started **1st** — Result **15th**

8 Superb pole mitigates score, but probably should have made life harder for Verstappen at Turn 1, where he was tagged. At the restart, a slide beside the rejoining Stroll dropped him behind Ricciardo and meant a long, four-stop afternoon. At least deprived Verstappen of fastest lap.

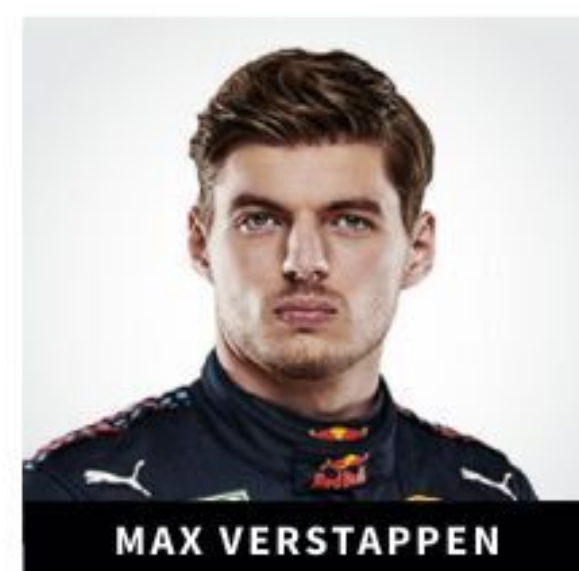
RED BULL



SERGIO PEREZ

Started **4th** — Result **3rd**

7 Shares blame for team's qualifying mishap – went off the road disturbed by Tsunoda when team-mate could stay on with double disruption. Harassed Hamilton in first stint and charged with tyre advantage in second. Happy to stand on home podium, but knew Red Bull's pace should have netted 1-2.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

Started **3rd** — Result **1st**

9 Only blemish was his role in Red Bull's under-performance in qualifying, where slower Mercedes snuck ahead. But was sensational in the race, brave going around the outside when that line opened at the start and kept it on the track masterfully. Nailed the restart and never headed thereafter.

McLAREN



DANIEL RICCIARDO

Started **7th** — Result **12th**

4 Split faster Ferraris in qualifying, but might have got Sainz too without late Q3 error. At the start his actions before clipping Bottas were not as bad as first looked, but still being slightly too fast into the apex meant he hit the Mercedes. Held it off well with a hobbled car in second stint.

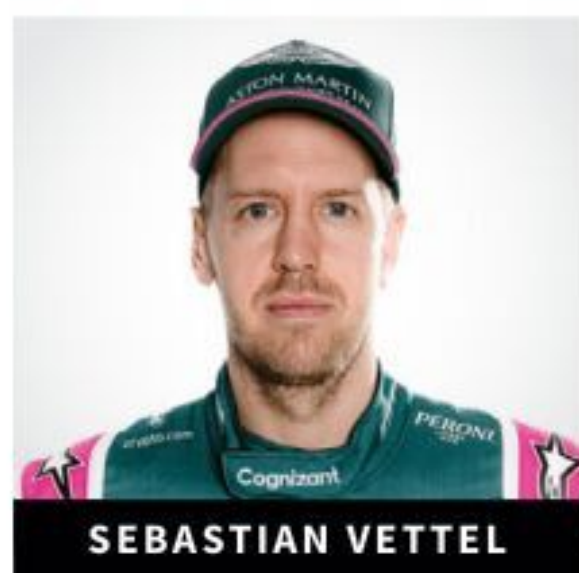


LANDO NORRIS

Started **18th** — Result **10th**

8 Tough qualifying job, which went wrong when he locked up and went off at Turn 1. Had to slow considerably avoiding Bottas at Turn 2, then battled past the Latifi-Ocon scrap post-restart. Chased Alonso either side of his very late first stop, closed late on but was never likely to pass.

ASTON MARTIN



SEBASTIAN VETTEL

Started **9th** — Result **7th**

9 No shame in missing Q3 given Aston's pace. Jumped Leclerc off the line, then had to go around the spun Bottas and wisely followed Sainz cutting Turn 3. Did rejoin a bit roughly, but only dropped behind Giovinazzi, who soon pitted. Kept his pace high in front of Raikkonen from there.



LANCE STROLL

Started **20th** — Result **14th**

3 Lost any chance of heading those with new engines on the grid with Q1 crash. Then at Turn 4 post-restart he misjudged his braking and was lucky not to wipe out Norris. Two-stop strategy dropped him back from Ocon, but he had enough pace to overcome the Williams drivers.

ALPINE



FERNANDO ALONSO

Started **12th** — Result **9th**

7 Didn't think track would suit Alpine but caused own Q1 downfall by not hooking his last lap together. At the start he nearly had to stop while getting round Bottas, but battled nicely from there. Long first stint couldn't get him ahead of Raikkonen but did mean he had tyres to stave off Norris charge.



ESTEBAN OCON

Started **19th** — Result **13th**

6 Had an engine-change grid penalty but still qualified behind Alfas and a Williams in Q2. Made great launch from last row before getting sandwiched at Turn 2. Needless post-restart contact with Latifi hurt his progress before necessary early stop to get rid of the softs and cover Stroll, who he beat to flag.

FERRARI



CHARLES LECLERC

Started **8th** — Result **5th**

7 Made "mistakes" that meant he qualified behind Sainz and Ricciardo. Off the line he dropped behind Vettel, which meant he was luckily on the inside of the melee and could move up to fifth bypassing Turn 2. Surprised he could not catch Gasly, and got fifth back when Sainz couldn't either.



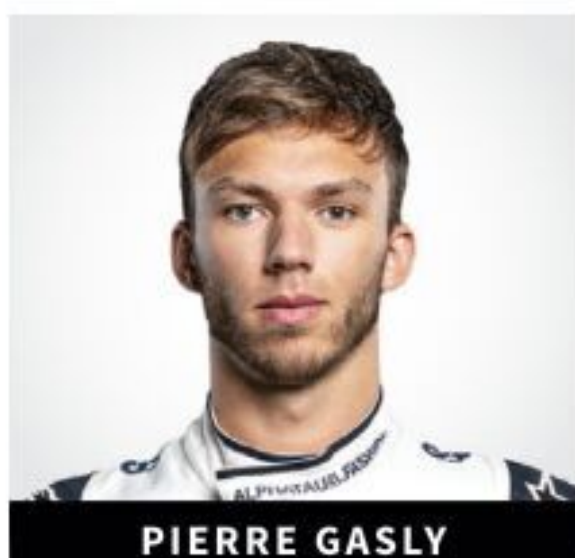
CARLOS SAINZ JR

Started **6th** — Result **6th**

7 Top Ferrari in qualifying, but slipped behind Ricciardo off the line, then lost out big time avoiding the McLaren at Turn 2. Passed Giovinazzi at restart, then chased Leclerc. Executed team tactic to pressure Gasly by running a long first stint, but didn't have pace to threaten the AlphaTauri.



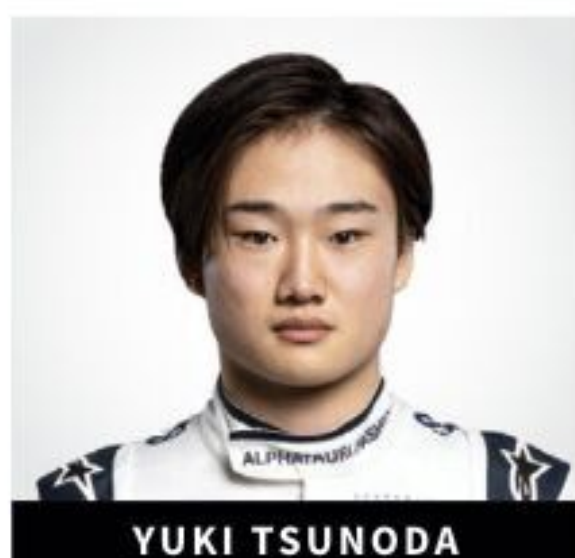
ALPHATAURI



PIERRE GASLY

Started **5th** — Result **4th**

10 Benefited from Tsunoda's tows in qualifying, but delivered the rest to head both Ferraris on the grid. In the race he was excellent, handling brake and engine cooling needs with aplomb while keeping his pace consistently high to stay clear in fourth.



YUKI TSUNODA

Started **17th** — Result **R**

7 Scores lower for role in Red Bull's qualifying woe. Still, did brilliantly getting to Q3 while towing Gasly, and did enough to start as the lead engine-change grid-dropper for good measure. Could do nothing about the Ocon clash that ended his race in the Turn 2 drama.

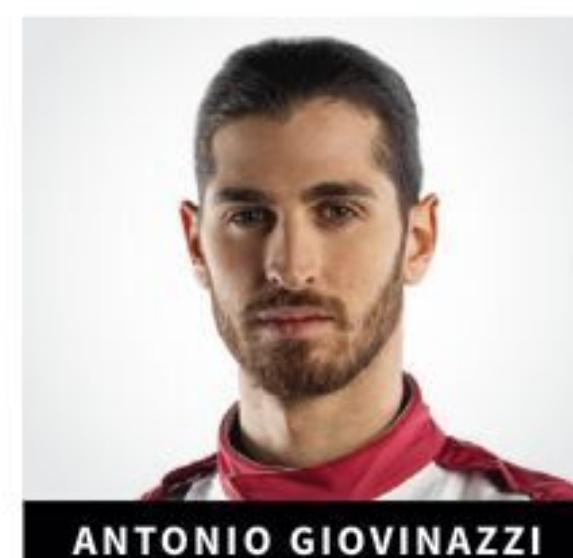
ALFA ROMEO



KIMI RAIKKONEN

Started **10th** — Result **8th**

9 Comfortably his best qualifying performance of 2021. At the start he was slow off the line and dropped behind Giovinazzi. Fell behind Russell when the Williams knocked Ricciardo his way at Turn 6, but battled back ahead with fine Turn 1 outside pass shortly after the restart.



ANTONIO GIOVINAZZI

Started **11th** — Result **11th**

6 Locking his rears on final Q2 lap left him slapping the barriers and cost him in qualifying. Made a great start and split the Ferraris. But after Sainz passed him at the restart he was pitted on lap 16. That left him trapped behind Ricciardo-Bottas scrap, and so Vettel and co overcut ahead of him.

HAAS



NIKITA MAZEPIN

Started **15th** — Result **18th**

6 Qualified 0.4s slower than his team-mate, but showed well in first-lap chaos after losing out to Russell and Ocon off the line. Brought in early in bid to ward off a Stroll and Latifi undercut, but slow change cost him. Dropped back from there, struggling in the disruption that comes from being lapped.



MICK SCHUMACHER

Started **14th** — Result **R**

6 Outqualified Mazepin again but didn't feel he produced his best performance in Q1. On run to Turn 1 he swerved needlessly, which brought him close to Ocon, but he just got away with it, before coming upon the spun Bottas and, with nowhere to go as Alonso jinked right, he hit Ocon.

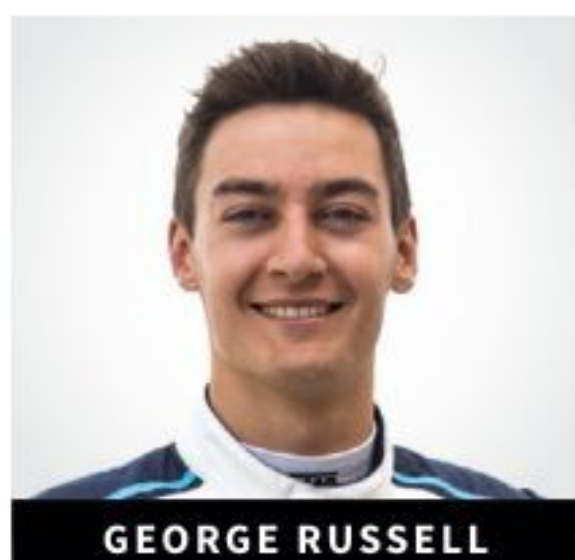
WILLIAMS



NICHOLAS LATIFI

Started **13th** — Result **17th**

5 Can't score higher because of his Q1 exit, while Russell beat faster packages. In the race he got stuck in early on, having Turn 2 contact with Ocon just after the restart. Sank back two-stopping afterwards, while needing to manage his engine temperature and maintain tyres.

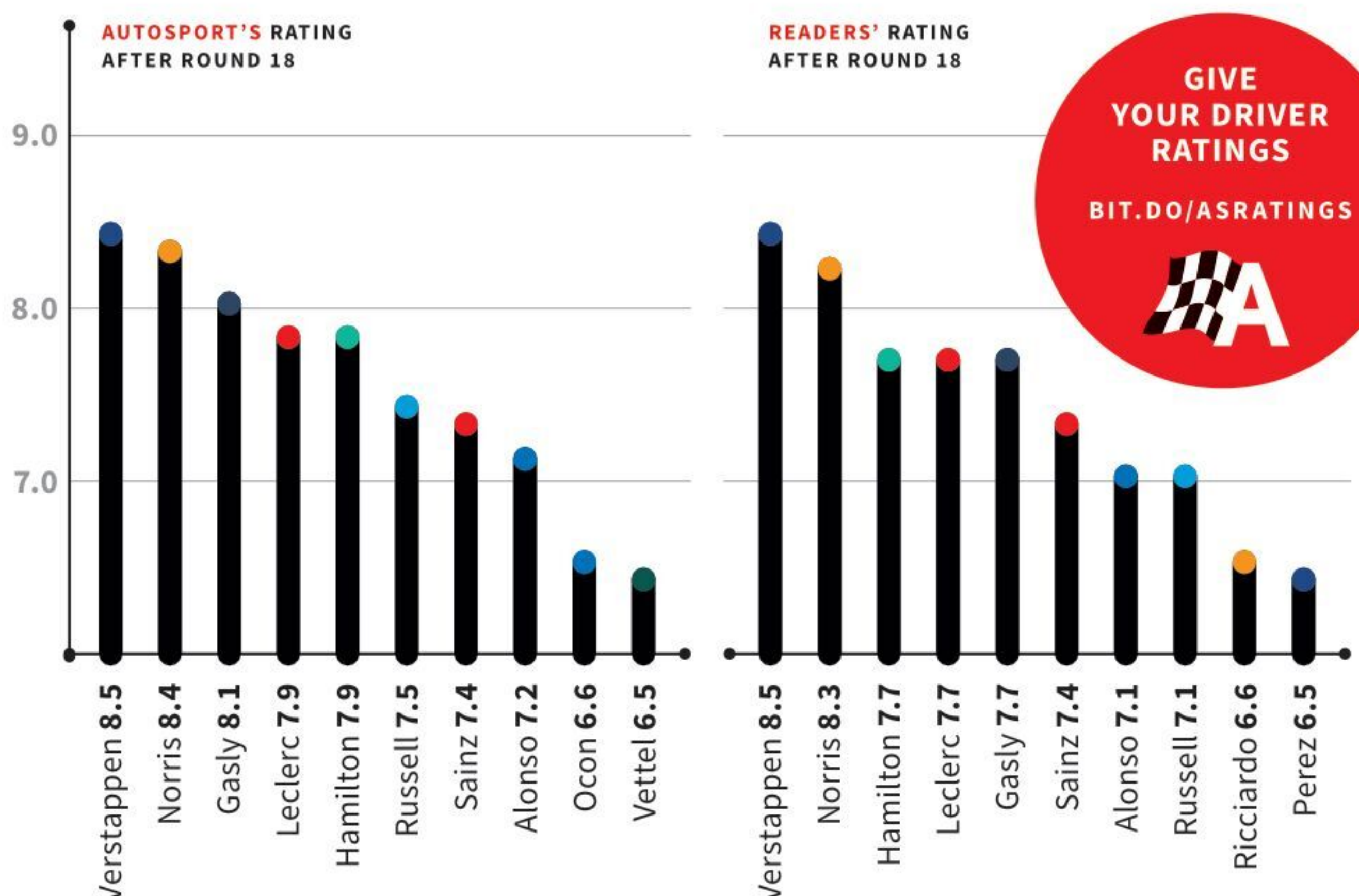


GEORGE RUSSELL

Started **16th** — Result **16th**

7 Earns bonus mark for outqualifying faster Alpines after mechanical maladies in practice. Clobbered Ricciardo at Turn 6 on lap one, which actually helped him stay ahead of Raikkonen and run ninth at the restart. Faded badly as the Williams required a lot of lift-and-coast.

TOP 10 AVERAGE RATINGS





Ferrari's win does not appeal to Porsche

Drama in Bahrain means that the destiny of the 2021 GTE Pro title could be decided in an FIA court. And there was disharmony even before that

GARY WATKINS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport**
IMAGES

The second leg of the Bahrain World Endurance Championship double-header began in acrimony and ended in the same way as Ferrari and Porsche duked it out for GTE Pro honours on the track and in the stewards' room. The shame was that the controversy bookended a fabulous motor race in which it was difficult to call a winner at any point, even after the title contenders came together with 11 minutes of the eight-hour race remaining.

The clash between the Ferrari driven by Alessandro Pier Guidi and Michael Christensen's Porsche has for the moment handed the crown to the Italian driver and team-mate James Calado in the #51 Ferrari 488 GTE Evo. Championship honours could, however, yet go the way of Porsche and Kevin Estre and Neel Jani in the #92 911 RSR they shared with Christensen last weekend.

The German marque filed a protest against the winning Ferrari after the race, had it thrown out by the stewards in the second significant ruling on the Ferrari versus Porsche battle, and then promptly served notice to appeal. The likelihood is that the GTE Pro drivers' title, as well as the manufacturers' crown sealed by Ferrari on Saturday, will be decided by the FIA International Court of Appeal at some unspecified time in the future.

The sorry side of the amazing story of the Bahrain 8 Hours GTE Pro clash started on the Wednesday evening between the two

races at the Bahrain International Circuit that closed out the 2021 season. The WEC Committee, a kind of kitchen cabinet comprising technical experts from the FIA and series promoter the Automobile Club de l'Ouest, announced a change in the Balance of Performance for the Ferrari after its draconian hit ahead of the six-hour race.

The power reduction for the 488, put at 25bhp by Ferrari, was halved in the revised table. Porsche raised an objection in the politest possible way, its WEC head of operations Alexander Stehlig suggesting that it didn't conform to their numbers, while conceding that the FIA and ACO have more data available.

Yet it was Ferrari, the beneficiary of the between-races change, that got all uppity. A protest against the BoPs for Bahrain 1 and 2 was made by the factory AF Corse team and summarily rejected by the race stewards. Full details of Ferrari's protest — or two protests, because it had to file one for each of its cars — were not in the public domain, but it clearly challenged the legitimacy of the changes under the so-called black ball rule that allows the committee to unilaterally make changes outside the automatic system introduced in 2017.

Ferrari cited a WEC press release from 2017 as well as an email exchange between manufacturers and the rulemakers in its protest. The stewards decreed that neither were legally binding and that only the relevant article in the technical regulations was such.



Controversial
incident delayed
#92 Porsche in the
closing stages

PORSCHE

They also stated that “changes by the WEC Committee are not subject to protest or appeal”.

The stewards’ decision came out at lunchtime on Friday, shortly before Calado put in a lap in the timed session that was within 0.2s of qualifying king Estre’s fifth pole of the season. The 0.160s margin between the two marques was, it should be pointed out, the closest of the season. But another pole for the Frenchman moved him and Jani level on points with erstwhile leaders Pier Guidi and Calado.

The Porsche and the Ferrari appeared equally matched as the race got under way. Estre and Calado were rarely separated by more than a second for the first 30 or so laps before the Brit snuck ahead shortly before the first pitstops. The Frenchman was back ahead after them courtesy of a faster turnaround, the Porsche staying ahead of the Ferrari through the rest of his double stint, and the ones that followed from Jani and Pier Guidi. The gap between

them, however, never went over three seconds.

The complexion of the battle changed early in the fourth hour. The Ferrari leapfrogged the Porsche in the pits when Calado and Christensen jumped in. The 488 was now clearly the quicker car: Calado was able to pull away, and Daniel Serra in the second AF entry also moved past the lead 911.

Porsche, at this point, decided to go creative on strategy. Christensen stopped early in the middle of his double stint, and then was called in during the fourth full course yellow virtual safety car of the race to be replaced by Estre. The Frenchman resumed on four new Michelin tyres 11 or so seconds behind Calado on older rubber, wiped out the gap and raced into a 12s lead. Crucially, Pier Guidi was only able to knock a couple of seconds off that when he got new tyres to try to catch Estre. It looked like this was going to be the defining stint of the race.

Christensen took over with one hour and 10 minutes left during a fifth and final FCY. Porsche had no new tyres left and the Dane got a mix-and-match set of the best of the used rubber available, while Pier Guidi had two newMichelins on the rear.

The two-tyre stop for the Italian more or less halved the Porsche’s advantage, and then Pier Guidi closed down the leader in the space of 20 laps. But his tyres were past their best when he arrived on Christensen’s tail, and that’s where he stayed.

The manoeuvre that may or may not prove to be decisive happened when Filipe Albuquerque in the United Autosports ORECA dived down the inside of the Porsche at the final corner. The Ferrari just ran into the back of the Porsche, spinning it around.

Seconds later a message flashed up from the race director on the

“The sorry side of the amazing story of the Bahrain GTE Pro clash started on Wednesday”

timing screens telling Ferrari to order its driver to give back the position to Christensen. The Ferrari slowed and wasn’t at full speed on the front stretch when the Porsche ducked into the pits. A lap later the Ferrari followed suit: the early stops in the last FCY had meant both cars needed a splash.

Pier Guidi was a couple of seconds up after the stops, and Christensen on his old rubber could get no nearer. The call for the positions to be reversed had been rescinded, though not publicly communicated on the timing screens. The Ferrari crossed the line at the 10pm finish three seconds to the good.

Christensen was livid, claiming that he had been “just punched off the track”. Nor was he doing anything untoward as the P2 came past, he insisted. “The prototype was overtaking me and I was on the outside of the corner as you would expect,” he explained. “I wasn’t braking early, but, of course, I have to >>



Calado and Pier Guidi
claimed race and
crown – for now...



...and the Italian doesn't
look massively joyous
on the podium



**NO ADS.
JUST MORE
PERFORMANCE**



Nakajima gets a sendoff after the final race, and win, of WEC Toyota career

make sure I can make the corner.”

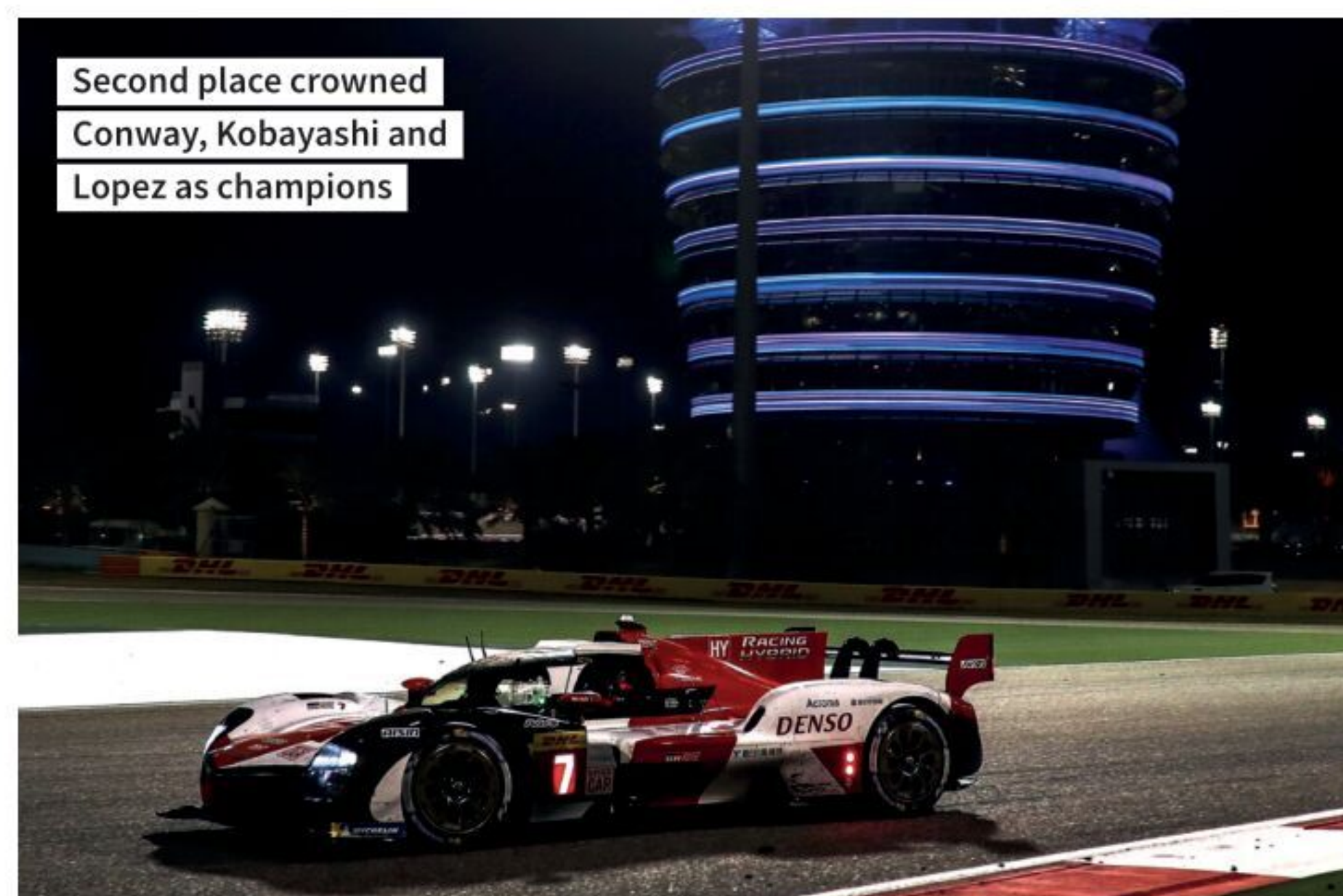
“Unintentional” was the word Pier Guidi used to explain the incident. “I didn’t like [what happened] but I couldn’t do anything different – I couldn’t avoid him,” he continued. Pier Guidi also pointed out that he had lost significant time on the lap after the incident in his efforts to give back the position. He was approximately 10s slower, the gap between the two cars after Christensen’s spin.

Porsche quickly put in a protest. It centred on the call from race control, which it argued was made unilaterally by the race director contrary to the FIA’s International Sporting Code. The stewards rejected the protest, claiming that they had made the decision. “All the decisions related to the incident between #51 and #92 in Turn 14 were reported to the stewards by the race director, investigated and taken by the stewards in accordance with the race director,” read their bulletin. Porsche served notice of its intent to appeal, and from that moment had 96 hours to put together its case.

The second cars from Ferrari and Porsche finished third and fourth respectively. The Porsche driven by Gianmaria Bruni, Richard Lietz and Frederic Makowiecki briefly led from the end of the first hour and on into the third after an early first stop. The Ferrari of Miguel Molina and Daniel Serra was used as a tactical guinea pig by AF, the car twice getting a new set of rearMichelins, rather than the more normal hard-used left side tyres, to trial the strategy for #51.

Conway and co are champs

The battle for the 2021 WEC was more or less decided in qualifying last weekend. It was pretty much over when Kamui Kobayashi took pole position and the point that goes with it aboard the #7 Toyota GR010 HYBRID. All the Japanese driver and team-mates Mike Conway and Jose Maria Lopez had to do after that to retain their crown was to take the chequered flag.



Second place crowned Conway, Kobayashi and Lopez as champions



“The battle for the 2021 WEC was more or less decided in qualifying last weekend”

A third-place finish in the Hypercar class was enough for them to make it two in row, but in the end they finished second to the sister car of Sebastien Buemi, Brendon Hartley and Kazuki Nakajima to finish five points clear. The point for pole turned out to be academic at the end of a race in which the #8 Toyota admittedly had the edge.

There would have been a chance for the drivers of the #8 had they taken pole, so long as the Alpine, the only other car in the Hypercar class, finished between them. That explains an unprecedented focus on qualifying through practice.

Normally, Toyota sends out the driver due to qualify his car for one qualification simulation in the final period of free practice. This time the chosen two, Kobayashi and Hartley, got to go for a quali run in every session. It was unprecedented. Hartley, who had notched up the #8 car's first pole of the season the previous weekend, headed Kobayashi each time in practice. The odds looked good for another, which would have given him and his team-mates the faintest whiff of the title.

It didn't work out like that. Kobayashi, who had complained of too much understeer when he trailed #8 in qualifying for Bahrain 1, nailed a lap. He found 1.2s week to week, whereas Hartley gained just 0.5s. There were extenuating circumstances, however. Hartley encountered a minor engine glitch in both FP3 (when he was fastest) and qualifying (when he wasn't). Toyota Gazoo Racing Europe technical director Pascal Vasselon wasn't entirely sure if it proved decisive. “There was an engine response problem,” he said. “The time loss has to be quantified.”

With the title gone but for the first retirement of one of Toyota's new Le Mans Hypercars, the drivers of #8 had a new target. It was announced in race week that this would be Nakajima's last start with the WEC team. What better way for a stalwart of the team to bow out with a victory?

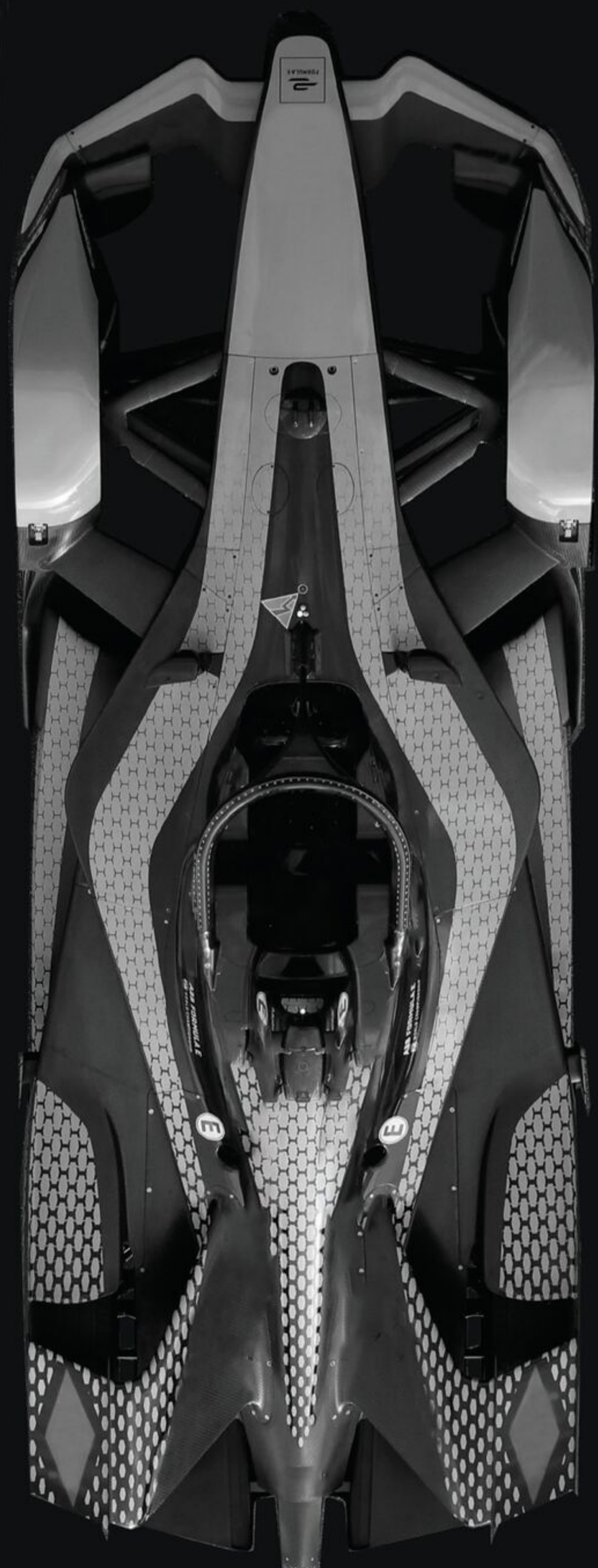
The Japanese and his team-mates lost contact in the championship in the first of the Bahrain races after adopting an aggressive set-up to combat understeer. It left them with a far too pointy car that rooted its rear Michelins over the course of a double stint in the desert heat. This time, said Buemi, they did a “copy/paste” of the set-up from the sister car. “Basically, we took over the set-up from car #7,” he said, “just to make sure that we don't have such [high] degradation anymore.”

The #8 Toyota may have adopted the set-up of the sister car, but it went for a different strategy early in the race. The Alpine-Gibson A480 grandfathered LMP1 car in Nicolas Lapierre's hands >>

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“Davidson erroneously came into the pits in what he called an ‘old man’s mistake’”

got ahead of the Toyotas from the second row of the grid at the start and Buemi, down in third, decided to bring his Formula E experience into play. A bit of fuel saving allowed him to go a lap longer than Conway and, more crucially, he took four tyres at his first stop to the other car’s two left-side Michelins only.

Buemi was eight seconds down after the stops, but on the fresher rubber he quickly caught the Briton, passing him inside a dozen laps and then pulling out a seven-second advantage. The #8 would lead all but 11 of the remaining laps of the race.

There was a little twist in the tale, however. Lopez had the fresher tyres at the end courtesy of those two extra new Michelins that went on #7 at the first stops, and was able to close down Nakajima over the closing laps. A gap that had stood at nearly 40s when they climbed aboard their respective cars came down to just seven at the finish.

Buemi pointed out that #8 had lost a little more time in the pits than #7. A handful of seconds lost to a swap of the steering wheel after some missed gearchanges was among the delays. “We lost over 15 seconds to the sister car in the pitstops,” said the Swiss, “so I think we had a bit more pace on the track.”

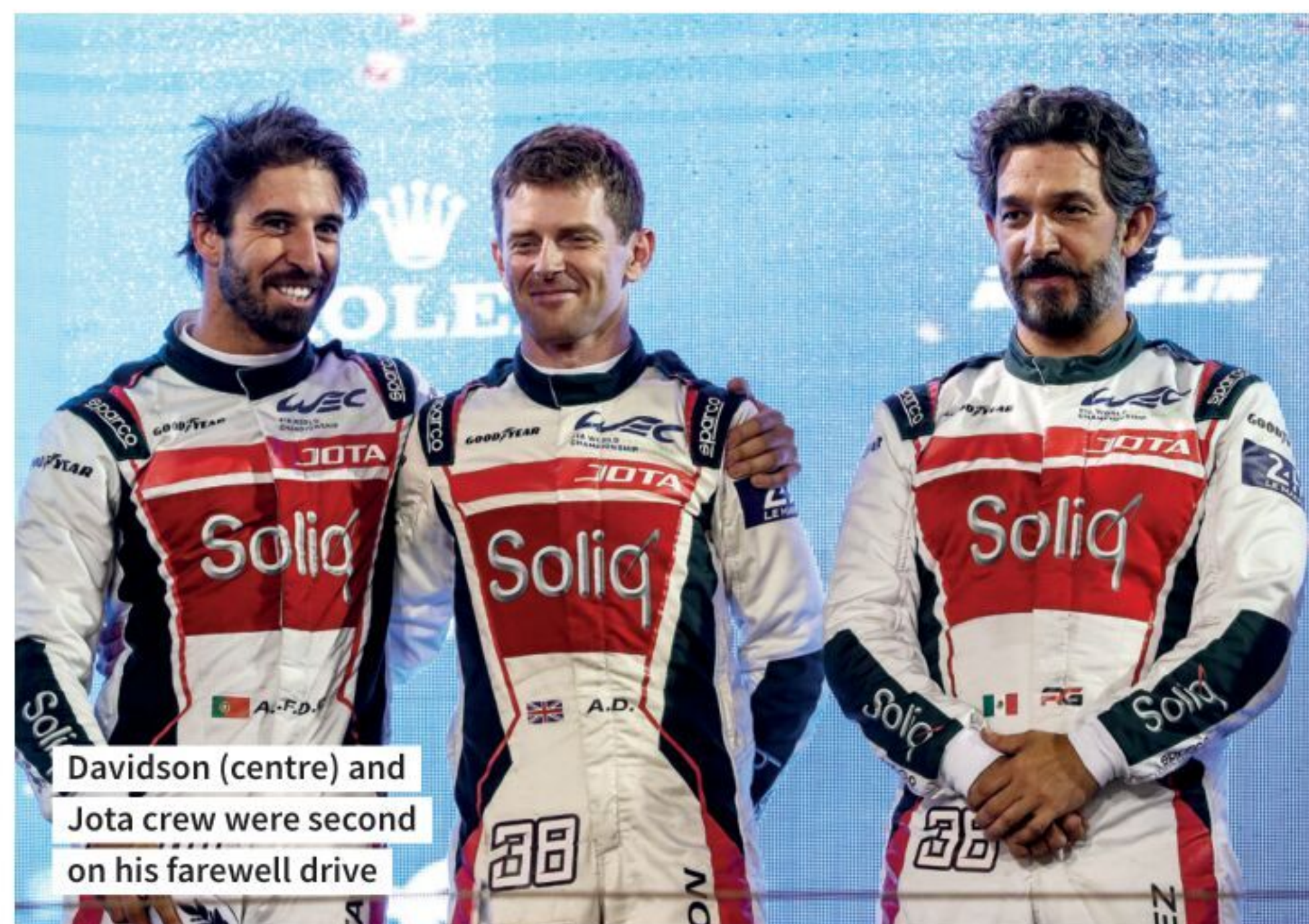
The Alpine led for eight laps before being hit by a gearshift problem that required a pitstop to change an actuator. Lapierre, Matthieu Vaxiviere and Andre Negrao fought back from the six-minute delay to get ahead of all the P2s and finish third.

WRT completes remarkable season

WRT capped an amazing debut season in the LMP2 ranks by claiming a dominant race victory and the class title with Robin Frijns, Ferdinand Habsburg and Charles Milesi. Their winning margin was even bigger than in the opening Bahrain race, though they were arguably less dominant this time aboard their ORECA-Gibson 07.

Antonio Felix da Costa snatched second from the sister Jota entry with Tom Blomqvist at the wheel in the closing stages. The Portuguese, Anthony Davidson and Roberto Gonzalez suffered a minute’s worth of delays along the way: a new nose was required after Gonzalez clashed with Loic Duval in the Realteam ORECA early doors and Davidson erroneously came into the pits in what he called an “old man’s mistake”, and then compounded his error by picking up a drivethrough as he sped out of the pitlane in a hurry.

Davidson made amends when he got back in for the final laps of his professional racing career. His double was, according to Jota’s analysis, the fastest in P2 of the Bahrain double-header. It anchored the #38 entry’s comeback, though it is too simplistic to say it could have won without its delays. WRT also lost time in the pits early on as the result of a slow wheel change and a restarting glitch.



Davidson (centre) and Jota crew were second on his farewell drive



WRT ORECA took LMP2 win and WEC class title

The sister Jota car that Blomqvist shared with Stoffel Vandoorne and Sean Gelael was hampered by a broken diveplane late in the race and then a nose change. But it still finished five seconds up on the United car Albuquerque shared with Phil Hanson and Fabio Scherer.

The undisputed AF Ferrari title

Nicklas Nielsen, Alessio Rovera and Francois Perrodo claimed a fourth GTE Am victory of the season aboard their AF-run Ferrari 488 GTE. It was another win that had all the hallmarks of their successful pursuit of the class title. They were the most consistent performers over the eight hours, helped on their way by carrying 30kg rather than the 45kg of success ballast as in Bahrain 1 and the same power increase as the Pro Ferraris. They got everything right whereas their rivals didn’t.

Matt Campbell put in another storming finish in the lead Dempsey-Proton Porsche he shared with Jaxon Evans and Christian Ried, this time leaving it until the last corner to take the runner-up spot from the Project 1 Porsche driven by Riccardo Pera. Proton was always playing catch-up after bronze driver Ried completed a triple stint at the beginning.

Pera, Matteo Cairoli and Egidio Perfetti were delayed by a one-minute stop/go when the first-named came uncomfortably close to a marshal on the track during an FCY. The team also had to put the Italian back in the car for an extra stint after he fell two minutes short of the required driving time.

Perrodo and co’s only rivals for the title, the TF Sport Aston crew of Ben Keating, Dylan Pereira and Felipe Fraga, lost time with a clash with the AMR Aston before a second incident that damaged the steering rack precipitated its withdrawal. ❧



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Nielsen, Rovera and Perrodo completed their successful GTE Am season

RESULTS WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP ROUND 6/6, SAKHIR, BAHRAIN 8 HOURS, 6 NOVEMBER (247 LAPS – 830.627 MILES)

POS	DRIVERS	TEAM	CAR	CLASS	TIME
1	Sebastien Buemi (CHE) Kazuki Nakajima (JPN) Brendon Hartley (NZL)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	8h01m25.441s
2	Mike Conway (GBR) Kamui Kobayashi (JPN) Jose Maria Lopez (ARG)	Toyota Gazoo Racing	Toyota GR010 HYBRID	Hypercar	+7.351s
3	Nicolas Lapierre (FRA) Andre Negrao (BRA) Matthieu Vaxiviere (FRA)	Alpine Elf Matmut (Signatech)	Alpine-Gibson A480	Hypercar	-6laps
4	Ferdinand Habsburg (AUT) Robin Frijns (NLD) Charles Milesi (FRA)	Team WRT	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-7laps
5	Roberto Gonzalez (MEX) Antonio Felix da Costa (PRT) Anthony Davidson (GBR)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-7laps
6	Sean Gelael (IDN) Stoffel Vandoorne (BEL) Tom Blomqvist (GBR)	Jota	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-7laps
7	Phil Hanson (GBR) Fabio Scherer (CHE) Filipe Albuquerque (PRT)	United Autosports	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-7laps
8	Renger van der Zande (NLD) Jakub Smiechowski (POL) Alex Brundle (GBR)	Inter Europol Competition	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9laps
9	Giedo van der Garde (NLD) Frits van Eerd (NLD) Job van Uiter (NLD)	Racing Team Nederland (TDS)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9laps
10	Loic Duval (FRA) Esteban Garcia (CHE) Norman Nato (FRA)	Realteam Racing (TDS)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-9laps
11	Dennis Andersen (DNK) Anders Fjordbach (DNK) Robert Kubica (POL)	High Class Racing	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-10laps
12	Beitske Visser (NLD) Tatiana Calderon (COL) Sophia Florsch (DEU)	Richard Mille Racing Team (Signatech)	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-10laps
13	Henrik Hedman (SWE) Juan Pablo Montoya (COL) Ben Hanley (GBR)	DragonSpeed USA	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-11laps
14	Miro Konopka (SVK) Olli Caldwell (GBR) Nelson Panciatichi (FRA)	ARC Bratislava	ORECA-Gibson 07	LMP2	-12laps
15	James Calado (GBR) Alessandro Pier Guidi (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Pro	-14laps
16	Kevin Estre (FRA) Neel Jani (CHE) Michael Christensen (DNK)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-14laps
17	Daniel Serra (BRA) Miguel Molina (ESP)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Pro	-14laps
18	Gianmaria Bruni (ITA) Richard Lietz (AUT) Frederic Makowiecki (FRA)	Porsche GT Team (Manthey)	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Pro	-16laps
19	Francois Perrodo (FRA) Nicklas Nielsen (DNK) Alessio Rovera (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-17laps
20	Christian Ried (DEU) Jaxon Evans (NZL) Matt Campbell (AUS)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-18laps
21	Egidio Perfetti (NOR) Matteo Cairolì (ITA) Riccardo Pera (ITA)	Team Project 1	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-18laps
22	Roberto Lacorte (ITA) Giorgio Sernagiotto (ITA) Antonio Fuoco (ITA)	Cetilar Racing (AF)	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-18laps
23	Takeshi Kimura (JPN) Mikkel Jensen (DNK) Scott Andrews (AUS)	Kessel Racing	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-19laps
24	Claudio Schiavoni (ITA) Andrea Piccini (ITA) Matteo Cressoni (ITA)	Iron Lynx	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-19laps
25	Francesco Castellacci (ITA) Thomas Flohr (CHE) Giancarlo Fisichella (ITA)	AF Corse	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-20laps
26	Tomonobu Fujii (JPN) Satoshi Hoshino (JPN) Andrew Watson (GBR)	D'Station Racing	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-20laps
27	Katherine Legge (GBR) Rahel Frey (CHE) Sarah Bovy (BEL)	Iron Lynx	Ferrari 488 GTE Evo	GTE Am	-22laps
28	Michael Wainwright (GBR) Ben Barker (GBR) Tom Gamble (GBR)	GR Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	-23laps
29	Paul Dalla Lana (CAN) Augusto Farfus (BRA) Marcos Gomes (BRA)	Aston Martin Racing (Prodrive)	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	-24laps
R	Ben Keating (USA) Dylan Pereira (LUX) Felipe Fraga (BRA)	TF Sport	Aston Martin Vantage GTE	GTE Am	128laps-steering
R	Khaled AlQubaisi (ARE) Axcil Jefferies (ZWE) Julien Andlauer (FRA)	Dempsey-Proton Racing	Porsche 911 RSR	GTE Am	90laps-accident

In each car, first-named driver started race.

Winners' average speed 103.521mph. **Fastest lap** Conway 1m49.448s, 110.612mph.

LMP2 Nato 1m52.163s, 107.934mph. **GTE Pro** Molina 1m57.032s, 103.444mph. **GTE Am** Nielsen 1m57.242s, 103.259mph.

QUALIFYING

1 Kobayashi 1m46.250s; **2 Hartley** 1m46.540s; **3 Vaxiviere** 1m47.025s; **4 Albuquerque** 1m49.525s; **5 Nato** 1m49.819s; **6 da Costa** 1m49.910s; **7 van der Garde** 1m50.149s; **8 Kubica** 1m50.372s; **9 Florsch** 1m50.744s; **10 Habsburg** 1m51.063s; **11 Montoya** 1m51.134s; **12 Blomqvist** 1m51.145s; **13 van der Zande** 1m51.187s; **14 Caldwell** 1m51.424s; **15 Este** 1m56.041s; **16 Calado** 1m56.201s; **17 Bruni** 1m56.541s; **18 Serra** 1m56.603s; **19 Lacorte** 1m58.712s; **20 Perrodo** 1m58.759s; **21 Bovy** 1m58.958s;

22 Perfetti 1m58.989s; **23 Keating** 1m59.087s; **24 Dalla Lana** 1m59.096s; **25 Al Qubaisi** 1m59.359s; **26 Flohr** 1m59.492s; **27 Ried** 1m59.936s; **28 Kimura** 2m00.301s; **29 Hoshino** 2m00.364s; **30 Wainwright** 2m01.282s; **31 Schiavoni** 2m01.941s.

CHAMPIONSHIP Hypercar drivers

1 Lopez/Kobayashi/Conway 173; **2 Hartley/Nakajima/Buemi** 168; **3 Negrao/Vaxiviere/Lapierre** 128; **4 Richard Westbrook/Romain Dumas** 53; **5 Franck Mailleux** 39; **6 Ryan Briscoe** 38.

Hypercar manufacturers

1 Toyota Gazoo Racing 206; **2 Alpine Elf Matmut** 128; **3 Glickenhaus Racing** 37. **LMP2 drivers** **1 Milesi/Habsburg/Frijns** 151; **2 Gelael/Vandoorne/Blomqvist** 131; **3 Davidson/da Costa/Gonzalez** 123; **4 Hanson** 107. **GTE drivers** **1 Pier Guidi/Calado** 177; **2 Este/Jani** 166; **3 Bruni/Lietz** 111; **4 Serra/Molina** 92; **5 Christensen** 88; **6 Makowiecki** 66.

GTE manufacturers

1 Ferrari 291; **2 Porsche** 277.

GTE Am drivers

1 Rovera/Perrodo/Nielsen 150; **2 Keating/Pereira/Fraga** 90.5; **3 Ried/Evans/Campbell** 79; **4 Perfetti/Cairolì/Pera** 78.





Ehrlacher leads tight fight with Vervisch and team-mate Björk

Ehrlacher closes on back-to-back tin-top crowns

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP

ADRIA (ITA)
7 NOVEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Yann Ehrlacher has one hand on a second consecutive World Touring Car Cup title after stretching his points lead with a dominant victory from pole position at a revised and lengthened Adria circuit in Italy. The Frenchman, still just 25, has a huge 36-point lead over Comtoyou Audi's Frederic Vervisch with just the last races to come at Sochi in Russia at the end of the month.

Ehrlacher scored a maximum points haul in qualifying on Saturday in his Cyan Racing Lynk & Co, drove conservatively but sensibly in the partially reversed-grid first race to 10th, then blitzed race two from pole position. His only concern was making a decent start, which has been a rare weakness

for Cyan's Lynk & Cos in recent races. "The team worked late to provide us with a new system to get us off the line," he said. "We have changed the system after three years and it worked. The car was amazing."

Vervisch started the weekend fourth in the standings but rose to a distant second thanks to a sixth place in race one and a runner-up finish from the front row in race two. He and Comtoyou team-mate Gilles Magnus pushed Ehrlacher through the first couple of turns, but couldn't live with the points leader thereafter.

Further around that first lap, Jean-Karl Vernay's already stretched championship bid effectively came to an end. Yvan Muller punted Nestor Girolami off, and as the Honda rejoined it made heavy contact with Vernay's Hyundai and Tom Coronel's Audi. Vernay started the weekend second in the points but was dismayed after

qualifying when a delay in the pitlane for a weight spot-check left him unable to progress beyond Q1. He lined up 12th in race one, finished ninth but dropped to 14th following a penalty for colliding with Nathanael Berthon, then the non-score in race two dropped him to sixth in the standings, 55 points down on Ehrlacher.

Muller finished fourth, chased all the way by Gabriele Tarquini, on a weekend when the 59-year-old announced he is to retire from racing at season's end. He was kicking himself after a mistake in qualifying left him starting both races from the midfield. But a ninth-place finish in race one was followed by a fine fifth from 12th on the grid in race two, for his last race start on home soil.

Santiago Urrutia's victory in the partially reversed-grid race one set up a Lynk & Co clean sweep for the weekend, although that weakness getting off the line meant he had to work for it. Esteban Guerrieri's Munnich Motorsport Honda beat the polesitter to Turn 1, only for Urrutia to muscle his way back past at the end of the first lap — much to Guerrieri's chagrin. "We all know how to be aggressive up to a limit and then if you go over the limit it's easy to do it, but it's not fair," he said following the robust but also impressive move from the Uruguayan.

Guerrieri then lost a further place to Coronel, who pulled a fine move around the outside of the final corner to earn second place and his best finish of the season. Guerrieri's podium and a sixth in race two leave him third in the standings, one point behind Vervisch.

DAMIEN SMITH



Guerrieri pinches lead off Urrutia into Turn 1, but Honda driver would be muscled out of the way

Whincup wins floodlit, rainy Sydney thriller

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYDNEY MOTORSPORT PARK (AUS)
6-7 NOVEMBER
ROUND 9/12

There were three winners from three races at the second Sydney SuperNight, which culminated in a spectacular wet-weather affair under lights.

The weekend got off to a fascinating start when pacesetter Anton De Pasquale was ruled out of Saturday's first qualifying session with a gearbox issue. That left Will Brown free to take a maiden series pole.

Brown led the first few laps after holding off Triple Eight Holden pair Jamie Whincup and Shane van Gisbergen at the start. But a faulty wheelnut dropped Erebus Holden driver Brown back in the pack after his stop,

van Gisbergen running long on the hard Dunlop to set up an impressive win.

Sunday's opener was all about tyre strategy, polesitter De Pasquale starting on softs, with van Gisbergen on the hards. Running long in the first stint proved key for DJR Ford man De Pasquale, his new hards able to overcome van Gisbergen's worn softs in the second stint as they finished first and second.

The final race was a wet-weather, floodlit thriller. Whincup, who bolted from sixth to first in two corners, led until the race was red-flagged with

seven laps to go. He was later declared the winner ahead of De Pasquale after officials decided against a restart.

An early safety car was costly for van Gisbergen, the Kiwi sailing off at Turn 1 at the restart. He got going again but was hit with a drivethrough for passing De Pasquale before the control line. That penalty was then rescinded because De Pasquale had backed off, before another was applied for a pitstop breach. Van Gisbergen ended up 23rd, but still leads the series by well over a round's worth of points.

ANDREW VAN LEEUWEN



Triple Eight racer Whincup was in control when race three was red-flagged

HORSBURGH/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Aguri Honda's two on the trot

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
7 NOVEMBER
ROUND 7/8

Team Aguri Honda duo Nirei Fukuzumi and Tomoki Nojiri completed back-to-back Super GT victories in a dramatic conclusion to the penultimate round of the season at Motegi. Nojiri had been shadowing the Impul Nissan of Kazuki Hiramine in the closing stages but was unable to pass until Hiramine slowed on the final lap, having run out of fuel.

Nobuharu Matsushita had put Impul in a winning position in the opening stint by battling his way from fourth on the grid into the lead, passing the pole-winning Bandoh Toyota of Yuji Kunimoto around the outside at Turn 3.

The Nissan was able to keep the lead through the pitstop phase by virtue of

Matsushita making an early stop on lap 23 of 63 to hand over to Hiramine, but a 40-lap stint proved one lap too many for Impul. Hiramine coasted home in third, losing a further place to the Bandoh GR Supra of Kunimoto and Ritomo Miyata.

Real Racing Honda duo Koudai Tsukakoshi and Bertrand Baguette kept their title hopes alive with fourth on a day when the points-leading Kunimitsu Honda failed to score. It means Naoki Yamamoto heads into the Fuji finale only five points clear of Nojiri and Fukuzumi, with Tsukakoshi and Baguette eight points back. Toyota's title hopes appear all but over, with the marque's best-placed crew, TOM'S pair Sho Tsuboi and Yuhi Sekiguchi, 16 points behind Yamamoto.

JAMIE KLEIN

 **motorsport.tv**
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Fukuzumi/Nojiri car got in front on final lap

ISHIHARA

WEEKEND WINNERS

WORLD TOURING CAR CUP
ADRIA (ITA)

Race 1 Santiago Urrutia
 Cyan Performance (Lynk & Co 03 TCR)

Race 2 Yann Ehrlacher
 Cyan Racing (Lynk & Co 03 TCR)

AUSTRALIAN SUPERCARS
SYDNEY MOTORSPORT PARK (AUS)

Race 1 Shane van Gisbergen
 Triple Eight (Holden Commodore ZB)

Race 2 Anton De Pasquale (below)
 Dick Johnson Racing (Ford Mustang)

Race 3 Jamie Whincup
 Triple Eight (Holden Commodore ZB)

SUPER GT
MOTEGI (JPN)
 Tomoki Nojiri/Nirei Fukuzumi
 Team Aguri (Honda NSX-GT)

ADAC GT MASTERS
NURBURGRING (DEU)

Race 1 Ricardo Feller/Christopher Mies
 Land Motorsport (Audi R8 LMS)

Race 2 Michael Ammermuller/
 Mathieu Jaminet
 SSR Performance (Porsche 911 GT3-R)



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Suspended Larson caps off Cup return with championship title

NASCAR CUP
PHOENIX (USA)
7 NOVEMBER
ROUND 36/36

Kyle Larson has gone from watching the NASCAR Cup decider race on the sidelines a year ago to winning it last Sunday. He missed most of the 2020 season due to a suspension for using a racist slur before completing a comeback by winning Sunday's season finale at Phoenix Raceway and with it his first NASCAR title.

After heading the most laps, Larson had fallen out of the lead late in the contest before a caution for a broken brake rotor on the track on lap 283 of 312 sent all the lead-lap cars down pit road for new tyres.

Larson, who had won the pole on Saturday and had the first pit box, edged Denny Hamlin off pit road, his Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet picking up three spots and moving into the lead when the race restarted on lap 289. For the final 24 tours, Larson fought off repeated charges by Martin Truex Jr and took the chequered flag by 0.398s to take his 10th win of the season.

"I cannot believe it," he said. "I didn't even think I'd be racing a Cup car a year and a

half ago. To win a championship is crazy. There were so many points in this race where I did not think we were going to win. Without my pit crew on that last stop, we would not be standing right here. They are the true winners of this race. They are true champions."

Larson, 28, was indefinitely suspended from NASCAR and fired from Chip Ganassi Racing in March 2020 for racist language over the radio during a public Esports event. He sat out the remainder of the 2020 season, with a return to NASCAR never a certainty. After Larson had fulfilled the requirements by NASCAR to lift his suspension, team owner Rick Hendrick opted to add Larson to his four-driver Cup team for the 2021 season.

During the time Larson was suspended from NASCAR competition, he still spent the majority of period racing, and won 42 times from the 83 open-wheel races that he entered. While it may not have been NASCAR, Larson's incredible winning percentage did not go unnoticed.

"I'll tell you, we've always known he's a wheelman, and he works so hard off the track," Hendrick said. "He deserves this, and what a year, man. I'm just fortunate we were



WEEKEND WINNERS

NASCAR CUP

PHOENIX (USA)

Kyle Larson
 Hendrick Motorsports (Chevrolet Camaro ZL1 1LE)

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES

PHOENIX (USA)

Daniel Hemric
 Joe Gibbs Racing (Toyota Supra)

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

PHOENIX (USA)

Chandler Smith
 Kyle Busch Motorsports (Toyota Tundra)



For full results visit motorsportstats.com

able to get him. It's unbelievable."

For Truex, it was his third runner-up finish in the championship race in the four seasons since he won his first series title in 2017. Without the final caution, Truex felt he was in good position to become a two-time champion in his Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota.

"It was just an untimely caution for us and we lost two spots on pit road and that was the race," he said. "With 20 laps to go, you're not going to pass one of the fastest cars out there. I think if we would have had the lead, we could have held him off. But hindsight is 20:20, and we didn't have the lead, so here we are. I'm really proud of our team and our season. Coming here once again as underdogs and having a shot at it — that was fun."

Hamlin finished third in the race and the standings, Ryan Blaney was fourth and 2020 champion Chase Elliott finished fifth in the race and fourth in the final points table.

JIM UTTER

Hemric rises to Xfinity top step and beyond

NASCAR XFINITY SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
6 NOVEMBER
ROUND 33/33

Daniel Hemric couldn't have picked a better time to earn his first NASCAR Xfinity Series victory – his last-ditch success last weekend snared him the support series crown.

Austin Cindric appeared to be on the way to winning his second consecutive Xfinity Series championship when a late caution in the race at Phoenix Raceway on Saturday night bunched the field and sent it into a two-lap overtime.

Cindric's Penske Ford ran clear for the lead on the restart, but on the final lap Hemric was able to pull up alongside and door-slammed him as the two raced into the final turn. The pair crossed the finish line trading sheet metal, but Hemric's Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota came away with the win by a scant 0.03s. As one of the four drivers in contention for the championship in the final race, the victory also handed Hemric the series title. His previous best finish in the standings was third in 2018.

"I knew that, for whatever reason, it was going to work out," said Hemric. "Even



Hemric whacks out backflip celebration to mark race and title feat

NKP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

when I felt like I gave one up last week [third at Martinsville] in order to make sure we got here as a race team, I knew there was a purpose."

Harrison Burton finished third in the

race, Riley Herbst was fourth and Justin Haley rounded out the top five. Ty Gibbs, who won four of the 18 races that he entered this season, clinched rookie of the year.

JIM UTTER

Playoff consistency leads Rhodes to crown

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES
PHOENIX (USA)
5 NOVEMBER
ROUND 22/22

Ben Rhodes didn't win the season finale, but he didn't have to in order to capture the 2021 NASCAR Truck Series title.

Chandler Smith passed Sheldon Creed

with 17 of the 150 laps remaining last Friday night at Phoenix Raceway and held on to earn his second victory of the 2021 season.

Rhodes finished third but was the top performer among the Championship Four drivers, which gave him his first series title. He got around Zane Smith to put himself into that position with eight laps to go after the pair had briefly made contact.

Rhodes had kicked off the 2021 season by winning the first two races, at Daytona International Speedway and on the Daytona road course. He didn't triumph again but remained remarkably consistent during the playoffs. Rhodes's seventh-place finish at Martinsville locked him into the Championship Four, joining Zane Smith, Matt Crafton and John Hunter Nemechek.

"I can't even breathe," Rhodes said. "That was the hardest last 40 laps of a race I've ever driven in my life. I was doing things with the race truck that I probably shouldn't have been doing. It was dumb but I had everything to lose."

For rookie of the year Chandler Smith, his success marked the 10th victory of the year for Kyle Busch Motorsports. "All glory to [Busch] upstairs," he said. "Without him, none of this would be possible and I wouldn't have the awesome relationships with my racing family – this is my family."

JIM UTTER



New champion Rhodes pounds round after race winner Smith

NKP
motorsport
IMAGES

Bagnaia scores as battle offers preview of '22

MOTOGP
ALGARVE (PRT)
7 NOVEMBER
ROUND 17/18

Much of the Algarve Grand Prix weekend felt like a prologue to the 2022 MotoGP title battle, from new world champion Fabio Quartararo and Francesco Bagnaia battling for supremacy on the practice timesheets.

Bagnaia's crash out of the lead at the Emilia Romagna GP in October already meant the title had gone the way of Yamaha star Quartararo by the time MotoGP returned to Portugal last weekend. But it would prove to be a race that would pose a major 'what if?'. Bagnaia dominated the Algarve GP, while a crash for Quartararo late on as he struggled in sixth would have blown the doors open in the 2021 title race had Bagnaia stayed mounted at Misano.

It was a fact that wasn't lost on Bagnaia post-race, but one he gave little attention to, for 'what ifs?' weren't within his control.

Bagnaia and Quartararo diverged in their tight Algarve GP battle come qualifying, when the Ducati man scored pole with a new lap record, while a set-up issue led Quartararo to struggle to seventh. The Yamaha rider found that missing feeling again in Sunday's warm-up, but Saturday had already decided his fate.

Four Ducatis started ahead of Quartararo, and without a lightning start he was bound to get stuck behind one. After dropping to eighth off the line, he recovered to sixth at



the start of the second lap when Tech3 KTM rider Iker Lecuona — who would cause a red flag on the penultimate lap when he crashed into Miguel Oliveira — and Honda's Pol Espargaro ran wide into Turn 1.

This would be as high as the world champion would get since he spent the rest of his curtailed race staring at the rear of either of the Pramac Ducatis of Jorge Martin or Johann Zarco. Running with a near-5mph top-speed deficit on his Yamaha compared to speed-trap topper Zarco, Quartararo was forced to make up time in any way he could to try to find a way through on the Ducatis.

This led to his spill at Turn 5 on the 20th tour of the scheduled 25 laps. Beginning his reign as world champion with his first DNF of 2021 wasn't an ideal celebration, but if Quartararo had to crash at some point then it came at the right time.

Bagnaia had led from pole, despite a bad launch, and steadily eked away from the

rejuvenated Suzuki of outgoing world champion Joan Mir. Eight tenths clear by lap eight, Bagnaia's lead would swell to over 2.4s as he dominated proceedings. There would be no repeat of the late crash that killed his title hopes, but he did concede that his early laps were fraught with peril as his medium-compound front tyre didn't initially give him the feedback he was looking for.

A third win of 2021 secured runner-up spot in the standings for a Bagnaia, now a fully formed frontrunner in MotoGP. It also won Ducati the manufacturers' title to cap a day that showed how potent the Bagnaia-Ducati combination is.

The late red flag meant that Jack Miller, on the sister factory Ducati, didn't need to get his elbows out for a tussle with the LCR Honda of Alex Marquez to land the final spot on the podium alongside Bagnaia and Mir.

Marquez's run to fourth, his best result of a "shit" season, was helped by a decision to



Quartararo dropped his bike on lap 20, but to no cost in the title race



Third win of 2021 for Bagnaia secured title for Ducati

RESULTS ROUND 17/18, ALGARVE (PRT), 7 NOVEMBER, 23 LAPS – 65.627 MILES

POS	RIDER	TEAM	TIME
1	Francesco Bagnaia (ITA)	Ducati	38m17.720s
2	Joan Mir (ESP)	Suzuki	+2.478s
3	Jack Miller (AUS)	Ducati	+6.402s
4	Alex Marquez (ESP)	LCR Honda	+6.453s
5	Johann Zarco (FRA)	Pramac Ducati	+7.882s
6	Pol Espargaro (ESP)	Honda	+9.573s
7	Jorge Martin (ESP)	Pramac Ducati	+10.144s
8	Alex Rins (ESP)	Suzuki	+10.742s
9	Enea Bastianini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+13.840s
10	Brad Binder (ZAF)	KTM	+14.487s
11	Takaaki Nakagami (JPN)	LCR Honda	+20.912s
12	Luca Marini (ITA)	Avintia Ducati	+22.450s
13	Valentino Rossi (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+22.752s
14	Andrea Dovizioso (ITA)	Petronas Yamaha	+26.207s
15	Stefan Bradl (DEU)	Honda	+26.284s
16	Maverick Vinales (ESP)	Aprilia	+26.828s
17	Franco Morbidelli (ITA)	Yamaha	+27.863s
R	Miguel Oliveira (PRT)	KTM	22 laps-accident
R	Iker Lecuona (ESP)	Tech3 KTM	22 laps-accident
R	Fabio Quartararo (FRA)	Yamaha	20 laps-accident
R	Aleix Espargaro (ESP)	Aprilia	7 laps-accident
R	Danilo Petrucci (ITA)	Tech3 KTM	0 laps-accident

WEEKEND WINNERS

MOTO2
ALGARVE (PRT)
Remy Gardner
Ajo Motorsport
(Kalex)

MOTO3
ALGARVE (PRT)
Pedro Acosta (below)
Ajo Motorsport
(KTM)



Espargaro nabbed sixth in
Honda cameo as he subbed
for concussed Marc Marquez



run the hard rear tyre. With Honda's Michelin technician telling its riders during practice that it wasn't even an option given the RC213V's rear grip struggles, Marquez's choice inspired Pol Espargaro to follow suit.

Espargaro, flying the Repsol Honda flag after Marc Marquez was ruled out with a concussion pre-weekend, claimed sixth behind Zarco, with Martin banishing some demons in seventh at the scene of his horrific crash back in April. Alex Rins (Suzuki), Avintia Ducati rookie Enea Bastianini and KTM's Brad Binder rounded out the top 10.

The red flag spared Luca Marini from a fight for 12th with his half-brother Valentino Rossi, who now stands at the gates of his final ever MotoGP outing after 26 seasons of grand prix racing and a career that has truly defined him as one of motorsport's greatest heroes.

Perhaps it is fitting, then, that Sunday's Algarve GP belonged to Bagnaia, a product of Rossi's VR46 Academy. As 'the Doctor' gets set to pass on the torch, it seems that his legacy is in good hands as Bagnaia looks towards mounting a serious tilt for the 2022 title.

LEWIS DUNCAN

Winner's average speed 102.822mph. **Fastest lap** Bagnaia 1m39.467s, 103.270mph.

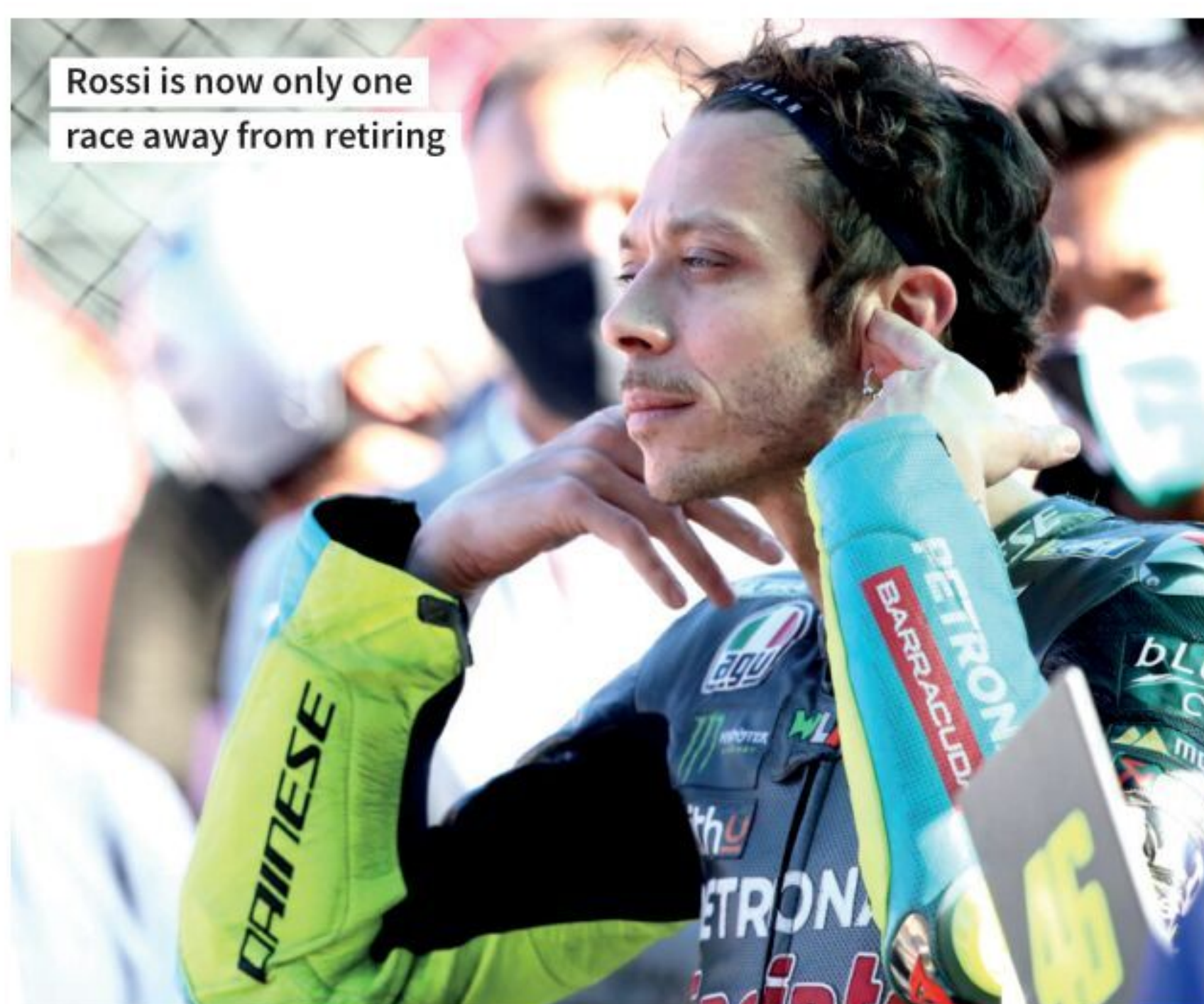
QUALIFYING 2 1 Bagnaia 1m38.725s; 2 Miller 1m38.829s; 3 Mir 1m38.893s; 4 Martin 1m38.916s; 5 Zarco 1m38.918s; 6 P Espargaro 1m39.058s; 7 Quartararo 1m39.131s; 8 Marquez 1m39.191s; 9 Morbidelli 1m39.321s; 10 Lecuona 1m39.387s; 11 Rins 1m39.649s; 12 Marini 1m39.828s.

QUALIFYING 1 Zarco 1m39.130s; Lecuona 1m39.171s; 13 Bastianini 1m39.283s; 14 A Espargaro 1m39.389s; 15 Petrucci 1m39.595s; 16 Rossi 1m39.604s; 17 Oliveira 1m39.624s; 18 Vinales 1m39.738s; 19 Binder 1m39.859s; 20 Bradl 1m39.907s; 21 Dovizioso 1m39.918s; 22 Nakagami 1m40.009s.

RIDERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Quartararo 267; 2 Bagnaia 227; 3 Mir 195; 4 Miller 165; 5 Zarco 163; 6 Marc Marquez 142; 7 Binder 142; 8 A Espargaro 113; 9 Vinales 106; 10 P Espargaro 100; 11 Rins 99; 12 Bastianini 94; 13 Oliveira 92; 14 Martin 91; 15 Nakagami 76; 16 A Marquez 67; 17 Morbidelli 42; 18 Marini 41; 19 Lecuona 38; 20 Rossi 38; 21 Petrucci 37; 22 Bradl 14; 23 Michele Pirro 12; 24 Dovizioso 8; 25 Dani Pedrosa 6; 26 Lorenzo Savadori 4; 27 Tito Rabat 1; 28 Cal Crutchlow 0; 29 Garrett Gerloff 0; 30 Jake Dixon 0.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP 1 Ducati 332; 2 Yamaha 298; 3 Suzuki 227; 4 Honda 211; 5 KTM 196; 6 Aprilia 114.

Rossi is now only one
race away from retiring



NEXT REPORT

VALENCIA GP 18 NOV ISSUE

How will Rossi fare in his final MotoGP race as he calls time on a legendary bike career? Will 2022 title favourites Bagnaia and Quartararo once again duel as the season concludes at Valencia?



THE ULTIMATE DRESS REHEARSAL

How do you prepare a new rally car for its debut? In Hyundai's case, you invent your own rally, then invite the media to make it a press rehearsal as much as a dress rehearsal

TOM HOWARD

"SO FAR WE HAVE ALREADY WON A RALLY WITH THE 2022 CAR"

of asphalt stages. Although his proclamation comes under a veil of humour, Adamo is technically correct since Hyundai has undertaken a unique approach to prepare for the World Rally Championship's new Rally1 era, by conducting a private 1500km three-day rally in Italy's Piedmont region ahead of next year's voyage into the unknown.

The WRC is undergoing arguably its biggest shift in regulations for a generation as it adopts Rally1 rules designed to provide a more environmentally friendly future for rallying's top tier. Next year the 'modern Group B' monsters, introduced in 2017, will be replaced by hybrid vehicles capable of packing their own 500bhp punch in short bursts, as 1.6-litre turbocharged combustion engines combine with a 100kW hybrid system. It will require a whole new approach

Those are the words of Hyundai Motorsport boss Andrea Adamo, delivered with a beaming grin as his team gets to work servicing the 2022 i20 Rally1 prototype at BRC Racing Team's commandeered headquarters in northern Italy, after a series

from teams across the board, from engineering, management and strategy to reliability.

Crews will now not only navigate some of the world's toughest terrain, but will have to do so using full electric power in road sections and service parks, while combining hybrid and traditional power during stages. Creature comforts such as advanced aerodynamics and suspension travel have been significantly reduced and, in the case of the centre differential, removed completely.

A whole new ball game requires a different approach to testing. The last of the three manufacturers to receive the green light to develop its Rally1 car, it's fair to say that Hyundai has been playing catch-up to Toyota and M-Sport Ford. To really prepare for January's Monte Carlo Rally, the team wanted to put its 2022 prototype through the challenges it will face next year. Step forward the South Korean marque's passionate Italian motorsport boss. Adamo is a rally man and much like a tree has rings when you cut inside, if you were to do the same with Adamo he would have seams of pacenotes.

And so the Rally Simulation concept was conceived in perhaps the most Italian of ways, over dinner, which in Italy is a rally of sorts given the countless courses — as Autosport found out.



Hyundai's Andrea Adamo came up with rally idea over dinner. Naturally



“WE NEEDED TO DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT AND IT BECAME A THREE-DAY EVENT”

Essentially a private rally was created, including morning and afternoon stage loops, road sections, zones for electric power only, timed services and tyre-fitting areas. In total the car completed almost 1500km across a three-day itinerary split between drivers Ott Tanak, Thierry Neuville and Dani Sordo. Each piloted a leg featuring seven asphalt stages (including a night-time test) punctuated by road sections, electric zones (7-10km) and timed services, beginning at 9am and finishing in darkness at 11pm.

To achieve this herculean operation, Hyundai employed 58 marshals to oversee stages closed off to the public by police. A live timing company was contracted and time cards were used, such was the attention to detail.

“We felt that we needed to do something different,” explains Adamo. “During a cooking evening I had this idea and spoke to the Rally Alba organisers about trying to put together a one-day test with a few stages and a road section, and when you have the seeds of an idea it grew and became a big tree. Then it became a

three-day event featuring many kilometres.

“It is very useful for us as we are learning so many things and how to work on the car and the small issues you can have. When you put a fixed and clear timetable together and have mechanics working on the car in 30-minute services, it allows you to understand how to make things easier to repair, it is something different. If you learn all of this for the first time in Monte Carlo it is far too late.”

Closing off roads for three days to create your own private 1500km three-day WRC event for one car is not a simple task. It requires support from the local authorities, the police to close off roads, and the local people to embrace having sections of their local area shut down to allow a WRC car to blast through hillside stages. Even Adamo admits that if he'd tried to do this anywhere else than his home town of Cuneo, it would have been impossible.

“There are a number of factors [that made this possible] and I would like to list them,” he says.

“The passion for rally from the people in this area, the Rally Alba >>

organisers, the local authorities, the regional president and tourism minister and the chief of the police, all of these people have been so cooperative. The police have been so supportive and lot of people have been there as spectators, the passion is there. I'm proud to come from this area now as I don't think I would have been able to do something like this elsewhere."

From the outside looking in, you could argue that organising a three-day rally for one car is a bit of an overkill. But a debrief with Hyundai powertrain manager Julien Moncet reveals the reality of developing the new Rally1 hybrid cars for 2022. "I would say so," admits Moncet when asked if this is the biggest engineering challenge he's faced. "It is brand new technology for all of us so we started from scratch, and now we are improving and the feeling for the driver is getting better definitely."

Testing is all about ironing out issues before the serious business of competition begins, and with such a change in technology problems are inevitable. There were delays on the first two days, a steering issue and a small gremlin starting the car on one occasion, but overall the i20 completed its 1500km route to claim a win of sorts.

What was brave of Hyundai was to allow all this to play out in front of an invited group of WRC journalists, including Autosport. But Adamo wouldn't have done it any other way. "In my opinion it was important to have you journalists here to see this first-hand," says Adamo. "I've had enough of this stupid static presentation with a



fake car and where everything is beautiful. In 2022 we will have enough fake news on social media so we have to speak with reality.

"I was happy to invite all of you here to see the truth. There are some issues but this is the thing, and we have run the car on the stage to see how it performs in respect to the current one and see how it runs with the electric power. I think it is the way you have to present the [2022] programme. We expect some glitches will come and we will sort them."

As learning missions go this could not have been a better litmus test for Hyundai in understanding the challenges it must master to be successful in the WRC's new hybrid era. Likewise it provided valuable information for the FIA, which sent a small team including rally director Yves Matton and technical director Jerome Touquet to oversee the simulation. No doubt the car completing the distance



New Hyundai i20 Rally1 was given a full and realistic rally workout on roads in northern Italy





would have provided a huge sigh of relief as the clock ticks down to the first round of 2022 in Monte Carlo in January.

“For sure, what we have seen over these three days is that the car seemed able to do a full rally which is the most important result, without any major issue,” says Matton. “Monte Carlo will be the first step and then after that they will continue to improve the cars, to improve the performance and the reliability of the cars, but it seems that there is no worry that the cars will be there.”

For the drivers, Hyundai’s unusual approach delivered much-needed seat time in real-world conditions, and a chance to understand how to drive with a hybrid system in an event scenario.

“We started early and we finished quite late but it was a very helpful experience, especially to have different stages on one day to experience the hybrid,” Neuville relates after completing his 698km

leg. “When you drive the same road all day it is difficult to get a good feeling; here we were testing three different stages. We are getting better [with the extra hybrid boost] and in the afternoon it was working quite nice, so it is a good step.”

But, in Adamo’s view, what has been the important piece of information learned?

“That you don’t have to become scared when you see the car running and it goes immediately quiet. It doesn’t mean the engine has broke, it just means it is on electric power!”

What Hyundai’s rally simulation has highlighted is that the WRC’s move to Rally1 regulations is a huge undertaking for all the teams, completed during perhaps the most challenging period of time for the world, thanks to COVID-19. Time will only tell how successful this test will be for Hyundai on next year’s stages, but what was plain to see from this no-stone-left-unturned approach is an abundance of passion to succeed in the WRC’s new era. *W*

Day 2		Time Card F	
TC 9A	SERVICE PARK F	TARGET TIME	0 30
TC 9B		COMPETITOR USE	
TC 9C			
TC 9D	BATTERY CHARGE	TARGET TIME	0 30
TC 9E		USED CONSUMABLES	
TC 9F			
TC 9G		TARGET TIME	1 36
TC 9H		USED CONSUMABLES	
TC 9I			
TC 9J	S.S. 10 KM 28.40	PROVISIONAL	
TC 9K		ACTUAL START	
TC 9L		TARGET TIME	1 26
TC 9M		COMPETITOR USE	

TOM HOWARD

“ON THE SAME ROAD ALL DAY IT IS DIFFICULT TO GET A GOOD FEELING. HERE WE TESTED THREE STAGES”

TOYOTA WORKING AWAY ON 2022 YARIS

While it hasn’t been as public as Hyundai with its rally simulation and M-Sport Ford with its Rally1 test programme, Toyota has been quietly beaver away to prepare its all-new 2022 WRC weapon. The Japanese marque completed its first test with its new-look GR Yaris in May, but has been ramping up its programme ahead of the car’s final homologation before the end of this year.

Initially testing began in Finland, but the team has since conducted runs in several European destinations, with its most recent outing coming on Portugal’s gravel roads prior to last month’s Rally Spain. The car has been seen running with eye-catching air intakes on the side of the car, designed to assist its cooling package.



New Yaris has featured large air intakes straight out of the Group B days

Toyota has elected to divide its resources into two teams this year, with one set of engineers and designers solely focused on developing the 2022 Yaris, while the other team continues refining the current car. Test driver and former

WRC competitor Juho Hanninen conducted the early tests, while Elfyn Evans and Kalle Rovanpera only received their first taste of Rally1 machinery at the end of August.

“We basically have two test teams,” says Toyota WRC boss Jari-Matti

Latvala. “Until this point we focused on having Juho testing the 2022 car because we didn’t want our drivers to get too confused with things because next year’s car is very different than what we have currently.”

Meanwhile, the team’s seven-time world champion Sebastien Ogier is set to test the car for the first time this month. Toyota has delayed handing Ogier a test until it felt its GR Yaris was as close as possible to the specification in which it will run when the season begins in Monte Carlo.

Ogier is only due to conduct a part-time season, with Monte Carlo set to be one of a handful of rallies he will contest in the team’s third entry, which will be shared with Esapekka Lappi, the Finn rejoining after driving for the squad in 2017 and 2018.

SEASON
REVIEW

SUTTON UNSTOPPABLE

A third BTCC crown is his at the age of 27, and it was just reward for a season of speed tempered by savvy to make the most of all opportunities

MARCUS SIMMONS

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP

motorsport
IMAGES

Qualifying for the opening round of the season is the single most significant session of the British Touring Car Championship year. Why? Because it's the first of only two competitive outings in which no one is carrying any success ballast. The second is the opening race, but here random incidents can skew the formbook.

Back in May at Thruxton, the field faced a damp track and it was a case of getting the slicks on at the right time as the surface dried out, so perhaps the significance of such an occasion was diluted. That's what 28 of the 29 drivers and their teams would have preferred to think. But really, the fact that it was Ash Sutton who emerged on

top proved to be an accurate barometer to the season ahead.

And yes, there was a random incident in the first race, Sutton's Infiniti Q50 turned around by a pinched-in Colin Turkington as he headed through the Complex on the opening lap. But the form on that weekend set the tone for the year. Not only did Sutton recover from that to storm through to finish 10th (ninth once Turkington had been penalised behind him), but he then went on another mission in race two, after being forced to pit under a safety car for a quick fix to an engine electronics glitch. He ended that one ninth, lined up third on the reversed grid as the rain returned, and took his first victory of the season.



“WE SAW PATIENT, RESTRAINED SUTTON THIS YEAR, RATHER THAN THE ALL-OUT WARRIOR OF BATTLES BEFORE”



Sutton emerges from second race of Brands finale as champion

A few weeks later, Sutton hit another setback in qualifying for round two at Snetterton, when a failing engine left him 15th on the grid. But once again he was in stunning form on race day, and used the softer option tyres to take his second victory of the year in race two. By the end of the weekend he was at the top of the points, a position he would only concede for a couple of hours (following race two of the third round at Brands Hatch) through the remainder of 2021.

From then on, Sutton and the BMR Racing crew that had redesigned the Laser Tools Racing Infiniti prior to the 2020 season played an almost perfect game of winning a BTCC title. Key to this was the almost telepathic relationship the 27-year-old enjoys with

his engineer, lead BMR technical man Antonio Carrozza. With the sporting regulations rewritten for 2021 so that maximum success ballast was increased from 60kg to 75kg, Sutton and Carrozza's focus had changed a little from the previous campaign. However good the Infiniti is with the weight, no longer was it feasible to qualify at or near the front when you were the championship leader. We therefore saw patient, restrained Sutton this year, in regular radio communication with Carrozza, rather than the all-out warrior of battles before. Get a banker lap in during qualifying, then explore the limits to try to pinch a couple more places on the grid, then focus on a good result in race one, avoiding unnecessary confrontation, keeping an eye on where your main title rivals are (usually that was Tom Ingram, but bearing in mind he was mostly carrying 66kg ballast on his front-wheel-drive Hyundai, he would normally be a distant speck in the Infiniti's mirrors).

Drop down to ballast somewhere in the twenties or thirties for race two, and do your stuff then, again keeping it clean. Indeed, three of Sutton's five wins in 2021 came in the second race of a weekend. Then see how the luck of the draw shakes out, and strike again in the reversed-grid race, albeit this time probably with more ballast than you had in race two.

Nevertheless, what Sutton could do with the full 75kg of ballast was hugely impressive. Apart from that weight-free Thruxton qualifying at the start of the season, his best Saturday effort was >>



“I THINK THE KEY BIT IS ALL OF OUR TESTING IS DONE WITH FULL SUCCESS BALLAST”

sixth (at Knockhill and at the Brands GP finale, where incredibly he was quickest in the sector comprising Hawthorn, Westfield and Sheene Curve), but he was never outside the top 10. He never once stood on the podium after an opening race, yet finished in the top 10 at all where he carried 75kg bar Oulton Park, where he went off avoiding a first-lap incident. He fell just nine points short of having the second highest tally from race ones – that was Turkington (with Josh Cook the clear leader), whose average ballast on his West Surrey Racing-run BMW 330i M Sport for the first race of the day was 23kg below that of Sutton. Contrast that with the best efforts on the next step down of ballast: 66kg. Only three times did anyone on that weight qualify in the top 10 – Ingram at Brands Indy and Knockhill; Turkington at Brands GP.

Then look at the race two stats, where the ballast was more evenly distributed on average over the course of the season. Of the leading five title contenders, Cook carried an average of 40kg, Turkington 34.5kg, Jake Hill 31kg, Sutton 25.5kg and Ingram 25kg. Yet Sutton blitzed the race two points – 144 over the season compared to 117 for Ingram, 113 for Cook, Turkington on 102 and Hill with 97.

“I think the key bit there is all of our testing is done with full success ballast,” explains Sutton. “You hear rumours, ‘Oh they’ve got 30kg in, we’ve got 35kg’, but we generally have 75kg in that car



ROUND BY ROUND

Thruxton

- R1 Josh Cook
- R2 Josh Cook
- R3 Ash Sutton

A nerf from Turkington into the Complex on the opening lap spins poleman Sutton around, and it's Cook who capitalises to win from Ingram. Cook doubles up in race two from temporary team-mate Cammish. Sutton storms back – via a safety-car pitstop in race two for an engine glitch – to win damp finale from Plato. Hill makes it a hat-trick of thirds in a great drive on slicks.

Snetterton

- R1 Colin Turkington
- R2 Ash Sutton
- R3 Tom Ingram

Turkington bounces back from tough Thruxton to lead Ingram home in opener. He leads the second race too until along comes Sutton – on the option tyres from 11th on the grid following engine failure in qualifying. Sutton gets ahead of Turkington to win. Ingram passes early leader Jelley to win last race from Sutton and Shedden, who is on a storm after losing pole to a tech infringement.

Brands Hatch Indy

- R1 Tom Oliphant
- R2 Tom Ingram
- R3 Adam Morgan

It's Rowbottom on pole, but a poor start leaves him with work to do and he recovers to third. Oliphant bursts from fourth on the grid to lead all the way and beat Shedden. Oliphant leads most of race two, despite a clash with a peeved Rowbottom, but Ingram pulls off a brilliant move on last lap, and Sutton also passes the BMW. Morgan beats Goff and Moffat home in third race.

Oulton Park

- R1 Dan Rowbottom
 - R2 Rory Butcher
 - R3 Senna Proctor
- Shedden is on course for victory when a red flag means a restart, and team-mate Rowbottom jumps ahead for a maiden win. Butcher is fourth behind Morgan, but in race two he vaults everyone ahead on the first lap to take a superb win from 'Rowbo' and Morgan. Proctor survives a clash that sends Sutton spinning to win race three from Jelley and Shedden.

Knockhill

- R1 Colin Turkington
 - R2 Ash Sutton
 - R3 Tom Ingram
- Turkington wins the first race from pole, heading Proctor and Cook. Sutton is fourth, loses some ballast for race two, and picks his way up to second. Then Turkington goes wide at the chicane on the last lap and Sutton is through to win, with Hill third. Ingram pulls off a stunning outbraking move on Jelley to win the finale, with Proctor also getting ahead of the BMW.



Three of Cook's five wins came at the ultra-fast Thruxton, a circuit where he always shines


at all times, because I don't want to be testing with less weight. Ultimately the cars will always get faster with the weight out. So if we can make that car faster with full weight, every time we turn up to a meeting and we've got full weight in we know where the car's at and what we need to do with it. So when you have a bad race and you take that weight out for the next race, the car comes alive and you charge through the field.

"If you look back at Silverstone from last year, we went from stone cold last to second [on the road] and people said, 'That shouldn't have happened'; but the car was just obscenely fast. We were on the same tyre as everyone else, but we had the car hooked up because we'd been carrying the weight. So take the weight out, it just got faster. The car does come alive when we take the weight out, and it's all because we've got the car so well dialled in with the weight."

Sutton's only failure to score points over the 30 races came in the final race on a day at Oulton Park where the field seemed to take their brains out and the event descended into a crashfest. He'd recovered to 14th following an off – and pitstop to remove grass from the radiator – avoiding a Turkington spin, and improved to eighth in the second race. That put him on the front row alongside poleman Senna Proctor for the finale and, with the option tyre available to him, it seemed a win was guaranteed. If we're going to be uncharitable, we can say that the blame for the first-turn clip with Proctor lies with Sutton – he hadn't quite cleared the Honda as he went around the outside. That caused the Infiniti to spin, but he was still mid-pack as he headed down to Cascades, where more contact fired him out of the race. But as if by magic, the initial spin had sent Sutton's main championship rival at the time, Ingram, onto the grass in avoidance, and now the Hyundai needed a pitstop to remove foliage.

"That's the thing," says Sutton of a charmed day on which he actually extended his lead by two points. "Race one, taken out, both me and Colin were off across the grass; race two we had a good little charge, but ultimately you look at that weekend as a whole and none of them [his rivals] scored big points. It was crazy for me to come into it leading and leave leading – I'd scored such a small amount of points. It was an odd weekend, that one."

The next two race weekends each provided a Sutton win, and this is where he began to look almost invincible on his way to a third title. Turkington arrived at Knockhill down in ninth in the standings, but began to rebuild his season with an excellent win in the first race. He led nearly all the way in the second too, only for a small slip at the chicane on the final lap to allow Sutton past. At Thruxton, the Infiniti was a solid fifth on maximum ballast in race one, before hunting down Cook in the second encounter for victory. From here, it was a case of playing the percentages until, with the title secured after race two at the final round, he put in an exhibition performance to win the last race of the season as darkness fell upon the Brands GP circuit. >>



...and Hill's in Ford came at overcast Croft

Thruxton

R1 Josh Cook
R2 Ash Sutton
R3 Adam Morgan

Poleman Rowbottom struggles to get tyres switched on in race one, and Thruxton maestro Cook adds to his win tally, with Hill passing Oliphant to take second. Sutton bursts through from fifth on grid to pass Cook and win race two, while Oliphant this time holds off Hill for third. Safety car ruins race three, and Morgan wins it from Turkington and Proctor.

Croft

R1 Aiden Moffat
R2 Jake Hill
R3 Colin Turkington

Moffat scores first Infiniti-mounted win in opener after soaking up pressure from Hill, with Proctor not far adrift. Hill gets ahead of Moffat on first lap for his maiden Ford-mounted win in race two. Moffat holds off marauding pack, headed by Cook, for second. Trip through gravel puts Turkington seventh, but from reversed-grid pole he dominates finale from Shedden and Sutton.

Silverstone

R1 Rory Butcher
R2 Rory Butcher
R3 Jake Hill

Only oil and water on his grid spot prevent total Butcher domination from pole in race one. As it is, he recovers to pass Ingram and waltz home, with Lloyd third. With 75kg ballast, Butcher manages things well in race two to win. Cook tries a last-lap move but is then excluded for failing rideheight test, promoting Ingram and Turkington. Hill passes Lloyd to win finale, with Sutton next.

Donington Park

R1 Gordon Shedden
R2 Gordon Shedden
R3 Colin Turkington

Shedden claims pole and leads all the way from Lloyd in the opener. Butcher is third, but gets a great start to lead race two. Then Shedden passes him, and Ingram homes in. The Hyundai passes both Scots, but a penalty for his Shedden move gives the Honda the win, with Butcher third. Turkington spins, finishes 11th, and wins reversed-grid race, as Hill charges to second place.

Brands Hatch GP

R1 Josh Cook
R2 Josh Cook
R3 Ash Sutton

Proctor is on pole but Cook dispatches him in first two corners to win race one, with Shedden third. A Proctor error at Druids puts him out of race two, and Cook wins again, this time from Lloyd and Shedden. Sutton clinches the title with sixth place, lines up fourth on the reversed grid, and claims a superb win with pressure off. Rowbottom gets up to second and fends off Ingram.

TURKINGTON’S BATTLE



He’s going to be #2 for another season

Colin Turkington only just scraped home in second place in the championship this season to repeat his 2020 position, and there were a couple of errors from the four-time title winner, but dig deeper and it’s apparent that he is still at the peak of his form.

West Surrey Racing entered its third season with the BMW 330i M Sport, and since that car made its debut in 2019 there is no doubt that the level of competitiveness in the BTCC has increased massively: that year, one second bracketed the top 10 qualifiers at Donington; this season, it was 26...

WSR is a proper purist’s team. First, it goes racing with rear-wheel-drive machinery, which any racing fan will tell you is the correct driven axle; second, while the majority of teams fit the customer TOCA engine, WSR has used the B48 BMW powerplant, tuned by Neil Brown Engineering, since 2017. The problem with that is, when 18 of the 29 cars on the grid use TOCA’s spec Swindon-built unit, it’s simply logical that the series’ technical directorship will look benignly upon those customers when it comes to performance tweaks, because without them the BTCC would be far weaker.

The 330i had its power revised a short way into its maiden season in 2019, slightly later in the year all the other cars had their power tweaked, then starting boost was restricted for rear-driven cars in 2020. Now throw in the increase in competition... “There have been some rumours that we seemed to lose a bit of ground,” says WSR boss Dick Bennetts of the season just past. “Whether we lost ground or others gained it is debatable – but we didn’t appear to lose ground on our data.”

“When we’re out front we can run well, but when we start further back we find it difficult to pass others. We can get through the corners as quick as anyone, and the BMW’s chassis handles very well, therefore we can only assume that we must be losing down the straights. The Donington incident [where Turkington spun] he was wringing the neck of that car. And at Knockhill [a slight off-track moment on the final lap] he was just under pressure, trying to win with 75 kilos.”

Turkington is “still very much top-class”, insists Bennetts. “It’s very rare he makes mistakes, and look at how many mistakes other drivers have made.”



Four-time champ can still be a match for Sutton

Ingram, second in the points for so long, dropped behind Turkington (see left) before the Brands finale, and ended the weekend another place down the order in fourth after being leapfrogged by Cook. Ingram’s move, along with engineer Spencer Aldridge, to Excelr8 Motorsport provided a massive boost for the Sussex team and he was a star of the season in the Hyundai i30 N. The majority of his wins involved audacious overtaking moves, but where he fell down was with the success ballast: 66kg (which he carried in six of the 10 quali sessions) was too much for his FWD car.

Cook took advantage thanks to a sensational final weekend at Brands in his BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R. This year, he added to his reputation as one of the absolute front-wheel-drive top-liners. Take out those random reversed-grid races, and Cook would

“THE TOP QUINTET’S CALIBRE WAS INCREDIBLE. IT’S UNFORTUNATE ANYONE HAD TO FINISH FIFTH”

finish second in the standings to Sutton – just two points adrift... The car was well-engineered too, but finger trouble or mechanical problems wrecked his chances at least three times.

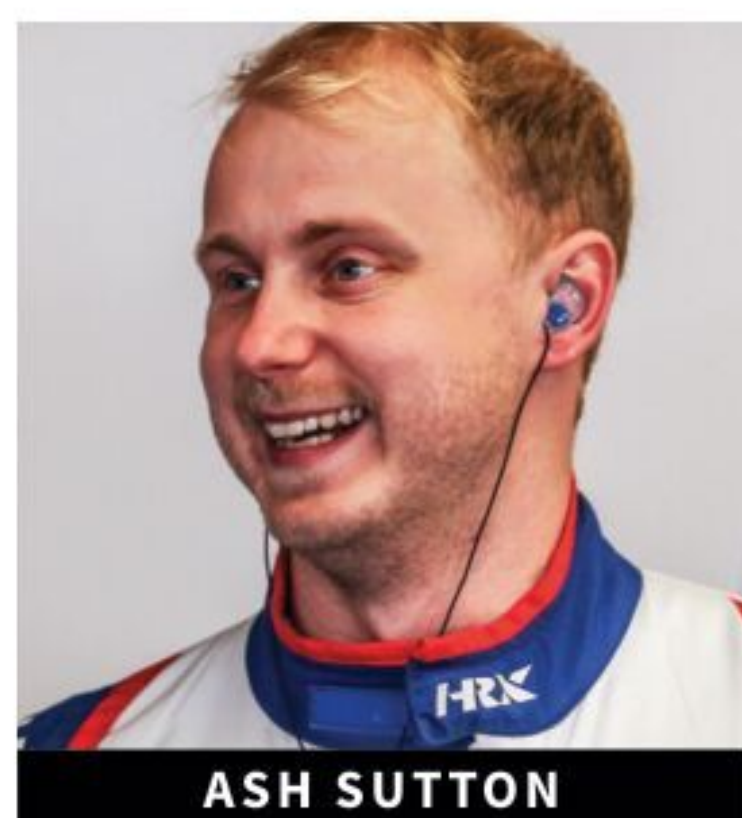
Hill, too, entered the final weekend as a title contender following MB Motorsport’s excellent first season as part of the Motorbase Ford Focus set-up. Much of the former AmD-run team’s crew, including Hill’s engineer Craig Porley, transferred across the Medway from Essex to Kent, and it was a great season for this true up-and-coming star of the BTCC. For much of the season the Ford carried success weight extremely well, but once he got up to second in the points – and the usual Ingram level of 66kg – the struggles began.

The BTCC’s top quintet were of incredible calibre this year, and it was unfortunate that anyone had to finish fifth. That unwanted accolade went to Hill, but in reality they all put in campaigns that would have put them in the top three in most other seasons. Only one, however, put in a performance that deserved a spot at the pinnacle. And, in hindsight, such superiority was evident right from qualifying at Thruxton in May. 🏆

P54 TOCA SUPPORTS REVIEW

DRIVERS’ CHAMPIONSHIP		
POS	DRIVER	TEAM/CAR
1	Ash Sutton (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing/Infiniti Q50
2	Colin Turkington (GBR)	West Surrey Racing/BMW 330i M Sport
3	Josh Cook (GBR)	BTC Racing/Honda Civic Type R
4	Tom Ingram (GBR)	Excelr8 Motorsport/Hyundai i30 N
5	Jake Hill (GBR)	MB Motorsport (Motorbase)/Ford Focus
6	Gordon Shedden (GBR)	Team Dynamics/Honda Civic Type R
7	Rory Butcher (GBR)	Speedworks Motorsport/Toyota Corolla
8	Aiden Moffat (GBR)	Laser Tools Racing/Infiniti Q50
9	Daniel Rowbottom (GBR)	Team Dynamics/Honda Civic Type R
10	Senna Proctor (GBR)	BTC Racing/Honda Civic Type R
11	Daniel Lloyd (Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra) 190;	12 Stephen Jelley (West Surrey Racing BMW 330i M Sport) 174;
13	Adam Morgan (Ciceley Motorsport BMW 330i M Sport) 161;	14 Jason Plato (Power Maxed Racing Vauxhall Astra) 156;
15	Chris Smiley (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 138;	16 Tom Oliphant (West Surrey Racing BMW 330i M Sport) 129;
17	Jack Goff (Team Hard Cupra Leon) 90;	18 Ollie Jackson (MB Motorsport (Motorbase Ford Focus) 77;
19	Tom Chilton (Ciceley Motorsport BMW 330i M Sport) 64;	

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



ASH SUTTON

1 Bounced and lurched that soft-sprung Infiniti to his third BTCC title. For the first time, he led most of a season from the front, so this time he concentrated on maximising each weekend, where he inevitably started on heavy ballast. The class act.



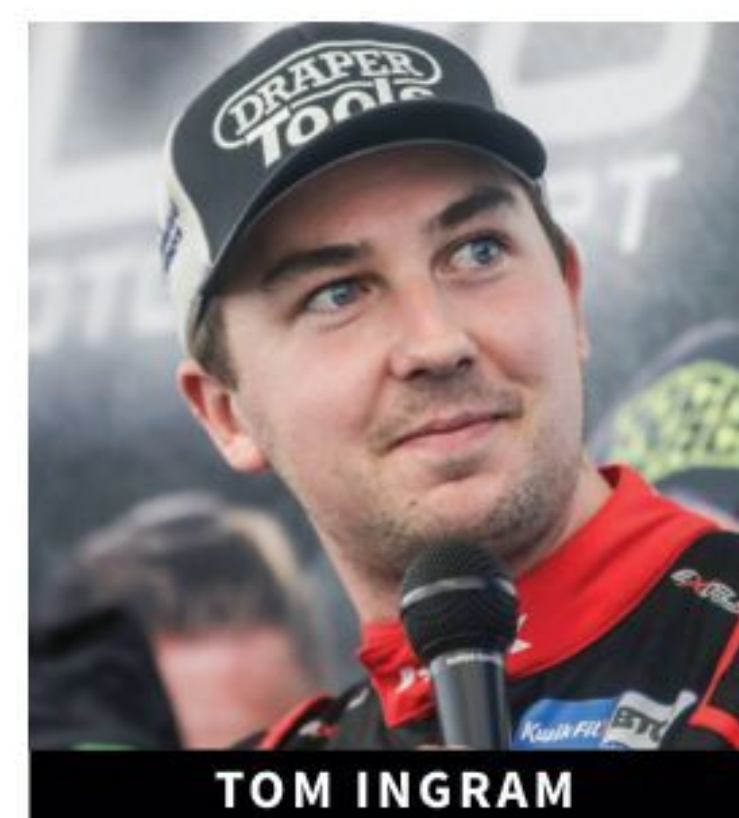
COLIN TURKINGTON

2 While Sutton and the Infiniti look spectacular on an in-lap, the similarly rear-driven BMW appears to demand razor-sharp precision. Turkington remains the master of this. Pulled his season around well after a bad early spell.



JOSH COOK

3 On so many occasions he appears beautifully at one with the BTC Honda, drifting it in fast turns. Won as many races as Sutton but was let down too often by things outside his control, without which he could have had a shot at the title.



TOM INGRAM

4 Played a key role in pushing the young-to-BTCC Excelr8 team and Hyundai towards the front. Fantastic on-the-edge driving skills and eye-opening racecraft, but was hampered too often by the heavy ballast the car just didn't like.



JAKE HILL

5 Amazing slicks-in-damp podium at Thruxton and stunning Croft weekend were the highlights for a driver who stepped into the top echelons in 2021. All this in his first year with the Ford. He's only getting better and a title is easily possible.



RORY BUTCHER

6 Struggled to get his head around the Ingram-inspired Speedworks Toyota set-up at first. But once driver and team had honed it, there were times when he looked on a different level to the rest. Lovely, classic style that's a delight to watch.



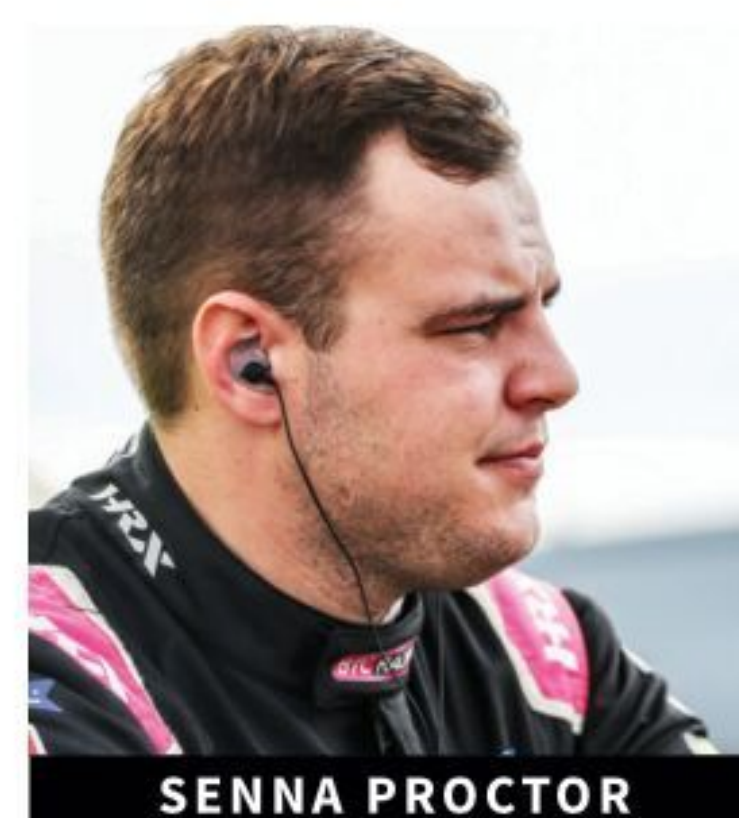
GORDON SHEDDEN

7 There were times when he appeared lost on his comeback BTCC season with the Dynamics Honda, and there were a lot of incidents. But vintage 'Flash' was back in evidence by the end of the season and he's still got a lot to offer the BTCC.



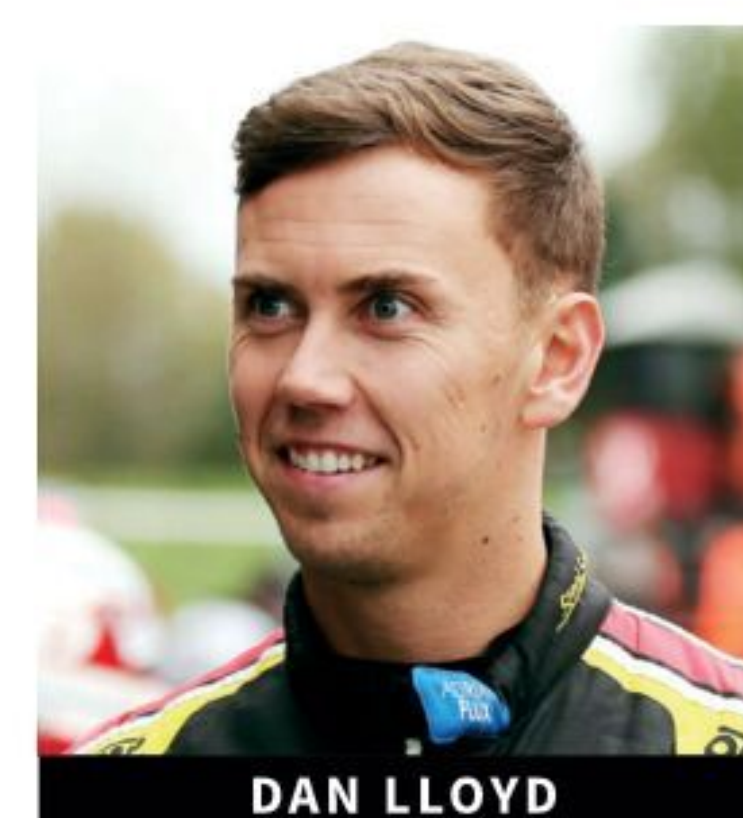
DAN ROWBOTTOM

8 An absolute revelation alongside Shedden at Dynamics, following his tough rookie BTCC season in 2019. He was quick enough for two poles, did a great job to fend off Shedden for his first win at Oulton, and got stuck into battle nicely.



SENNA PROCTOR

9 Only joined the series in round two with the BTC Honda team. Took little time to get up to speed and prove himself as one of the fastest guys around, as two poles attest. Hustling style doesn't look pretty but is clearly effective.



DAN LLOYD

10 After two years in TCR Europe, he took time to dial himself back into NGTC machinery with the Power Maxed Vauxhall. Once he got there, he looked better than team-mate Plato (who suffered straightline speed woes) and raced well.

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R	18	4	15	11	3	2	21	16	2	6	3	8	5	4	13	R	R	10	6	2	R	19	21	1	1	13	3	3	7	251
5	R	R	3	5	6	15	14	7	4	1	R	9	R	20	4	5	6	19	R	11	1	1	13	3	3	4	16	7	9	247
11	8	R	14	10	17	8	9	3	6	5	4	7	11	7	18	13	13	1	2	6	4	5	7	13	8	3	8	22	18	230
7	4	21	13	15	10	3	4	11	1	2	6	15	18	10	6	R	16	R	16	9	8	6	9	14	10	6	5	5	2	222
-	-	-	18	16	26	12	10	6	9	9	1	2	7	2	8	7	3	3	8	8	14	R	17	4	6	R	2	R	19	206

20 **Aron Taylor-Smith** (Team Hard Cupra Leon) 33; 21 **Dan Cammish** (BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R) 30; 22 **Carl Boardley** (Laser Tools Racing Infiniti Q50) 29; 23 **Sam Osborne** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus) 16; 24 **Sam Smelt** (Speedworks Motorsport Toyota Corolla) 5; 25 **Jack Butel** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 4; 26 **Jade Edwards** (BTC Racing Honda Civic Type R) 1; 27 **Jack Mitchell** (Team Hard Cupra Leon) 0; 28 **Paul Rivett** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus) 0; 29 **Jessica Hawkins** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus) 0; 30 **Nicolas Hamilton** (Team Hard Cupra Leon) 0; 31 **Nick Halstead** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 0; 32 **Andy Neate** (Motorbase Performance Ford Focus) 0; 33 **Andy Wilmot** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 0; 34 **Rick Parfitt** (Excelr8 Motorsport Hyundai i30 N) 0; 35 **Glynn Geddie** (Team Hard Cupra Leon) 0. **MANUFACTURERS** 1 **BMW** 869; 2 **Ford** 782; 3 **Toyota** 695. **INDEPENDENT DRIVERS** 1 **Sutton** 404; 2 **Ingram** 360; 3 **Cook** 350; 4 **Moffat** 304; 5 **Shedden** 302; 6 **Rowbottom** 293; 7 **Lloyd** 263; 8 **Proctor** 257; 9 **Morgan** 238; 10 **Plato** 238.

SEASON
REVIEW

THE SUPPORTING STARS WHO SHONE ON THE BIG STAGE

*There were all the usual thrills and spills among the BTCC support series
this year and plenty of impressive performances along the way*

STEPHEN LICKORISH

PHOTOGRAPHY JEP  **motorsport
IMAGES**

GINETTA JUNIOR
ASTON MILLAR

MINI CHALLENGE
DAN ZELOS

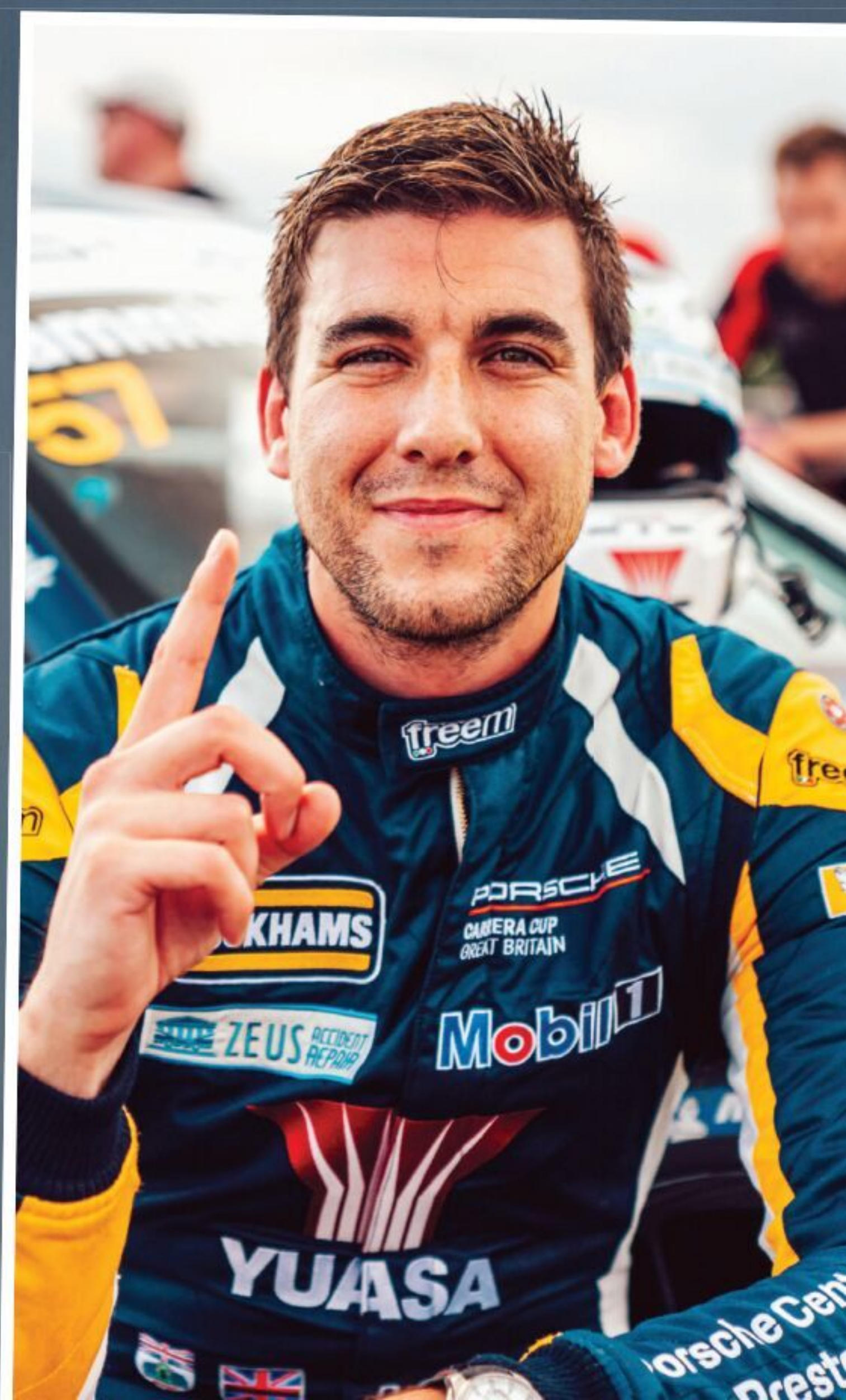




GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP
ADAM SMALLEY



PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB
DAN CAMMISH



BRITISH FORMULA 4
MATTHEW REES



PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB

From the moment Dan Cammish lost his Team Dynamics British Touring Car drive and elected to return to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB, many were eagerly anticipating a thrilling battle with last year’s series dominator Harry King. But, away from the spotlight, another driver was aiming to steal the duo’s thunder.

And Lorcan Hanafin did exactly that by qualifying his JTR-run Porsche on pole for the Snetterton opener by 0.4 seconds. “It set the tone, showed my intentions and showed the world I’m not here to mess around and the focus shouldn’t be just on Harry and Dan,” recalls Hanafin, who hadn’t been able to challenge King in 2020 but stepped up a gear for this term.

Yet, sadly for Hanafin, Snetterton also set the tone for other elements of his season. Stunning pace yes, but also misfortune. He had seemingly converted pole into a maiden win but he received a penalty for being out of position at

“SNETTERTON SET THE TONE AND SHOWED THE WORLD I’M NOT HERE TO MESS AROUND”

the start. He was then fifth in the reversed-grid race, battling a slow puncture. That opening weekend was not just a microcosm of Hanafin’s campaign, as he ultimately missed out on the crown by seven points, but also of the season as a whole. King could only qualify his Team Parker machine sixth, battling a gearbox problem. He then fought from fifth to win race two, only to push too hard and cop a track-limits penalty. Meanwhile, Redline racer Cammish – while not being the fastest – inherited race-one spoils and was promoted to second in race two, while charging rookie Kiern Jewiss took the other victory. Hanafin did net that first win at Brands Hatch, but his reversed-grid race was ruined by a track-limits infringement. Similarly, at Oulton Park, he won the opener but was taken out in the second race. All the time, Cammish continued to notch up the points, despite battling a lack of straightline speed, and took an important win at Croft, which was followed by Hanafin striking a tyre stack – an error that ultimately cost him the title. “I was struggling so much this year with car performance but I’ve still had 12 podiums out of 16 races,” says Cammish. And that experience of knowing what it takes to win a title was more useful than ever for the BTCC exile.



Cammish’s victory at Croft was a key moment in battle with Hanafin (below)



STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Dan Cammish	123
2	Lorcan Hanafin	116
3	Kiern Jewiss	104
4	Harry King	94
5	Will Martin	86
6	Lewis Plato	59





Smalley (r) and Hibbert (l) were usually separated by just a handful of points

GINETTA GT4 SUPERCUP

Two races played a key role in Adam Smalley not securing the Ginetta GT4 Supercup title sooner. Retirement in the third contest at Snetterton after unfortunate contact with main rival Tom Hibbert and also being stripped of a win in the Oulton Park opener, due to track-limits penalties received while battling the distraction of a door that would not stay shut, proved costly for Smalley. Especially as Hibbert took full advantage of those bad races.

“We both always had the pace to be in the top four or five so, if he was having a bad day, he would be finishing fourth and the points difference wasn’t that big,” explains Smalley. “We had that disaster at Oulton Park with the 12th and sixth and I was thinking, ‘How am I going to claw it back from here?’ It was just so frustrating championship-wise.”

Smalley departed Cheshire 36 points behind Rob Boston racer Hibbert, but he did not stay that far behind his rival for long. “From Knockhill onwards, we had an amazing rest of the season,” recalls Smalley. And that amazing run included double victories at Knockhill and Thruxton, along with a triple Croft podium and two more rostrums at Donington Park, to put him in a commanding position for the Brands Hatch finale.

Admittedly he was helped by Hibbert having a nightmare at Donington,



STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Adam Smalley	628
2	Josh Rattican (left)	577
3	Tom Hibbert	572
4	Carlito Miracco	501
5	James Blake-Baldwin	406
6	Tom Emson	403

where yellow flags meant he was unable to set a representative time in qualifying and left him on the back foot. But for Smalley to turn his 36-point deficit into an eventual 51-point winning margin was some achievement and showed he was a worthy champion.

Hibbert’s end-of-season woes also meant he was cruelly denied runner-up in the standings after a strong campaign, having been usurped by Smalley’s ever-improving Elite team-mate Josh Rattican.

GINETTA JUNIOR

Aston Millar knew the areas he needed to focus on for his sophomore Ginetta Junior season. His rookie campaign demonstrated he had the speed, regularly qualifying inside the top five, but he was unable to consistently remain there in the races. “The biggest thing has been I just tried to enjoy it this year and was so much more relaxed,” he says. “I was working on my racecraft and that helped me because the racing was so much better. I could predict what the other drivers were going to do.”



STANDINGS

POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Aston Millar	653
2	Liam McNeilly (left)	608
3	Seb Hopkins	516
4	Robert de Haan	484
5	Will Jenkins	415
6	Callum Voisin	363

That shift in approach and pre-season preparation clearly paid off. The 2021 version of Millar was unrecognisable compared to the 2020 edition as he only finished outside the top six in the final race, by which time he had already comfortably won the title. And even his R Racing team was taken aback by the transformation. “How he kept his head and bagged points – it’s surprising someone of that age can be that consistent,” says team boss Jamie Ross.

Millar did not have the strongest of starts to the campaign but kept notching up the top-sixes until the “turning point” of Knockhill, where he took his first two victories. He never looked back from there, bagging five more wins in an impressive display.

The only driver who could come close to Millar’s consistency was Fox Motorsport racer Liam McNeilly. He too grew stronger as the year wore on, having taken a maiden win at Snetterton. “At Snetterton, I qualified second and the pressure was unreal being at the front,” McNeilly admits. “That pressure came off once I got the win.”

Callum Voisin was the star of the early rounds but a 70-point deduction for a technical infringement and a few other incidents dropped him back, as the resurgent Millar and McNeilly took control. >>

MINI CHALLENGE

With two events to go, Dan Zelos looked the most comfortable of the British Touring Car support series leaders, enjoying a 71-point advantage prior to dropped scores being applied – the next highest being 42. That he only secured the title on the last laps of a nervy Brands Hatch finale is therefore testament to how his Excelr8 team-mate Max Bird hunted him down.

“I can’t ignore how well Max Bird did over the last few rounds,” admits Zelos. “I went into the Donington Park weekend with quite a big points gap but he didn’t give up and I’ve no doubt Max will get that championship [in the future] because he’s very determined.”

Bird’s flightpath to grab a three-point lead heading into that dramatic final race was aided by Zelos battling a damper problem at Donington Park that led to his worst weekend of the season. But, despite the threat of Bird, Zelos did not let the close battle overwhelm him.

“I went into Brands feeling surprisingly calm, which I think is massive when

battling for a championship,” says Zelos. And he certainly kept his cool in that deciding race, when he and Bird were among six cars ferociously scrapping for the leading places throughout. Zelos, mindful of the points situation, estimates he was only racing at “80%” but that did not stop him making a brave move on Max Coates. “At one point in the final race, I wasn’t going to win the championship,” he says. “It was a good spectacle to look back on and very exciting for everyone involved. That final lap was almost in slow motion – I’ve never worked so hard to get every apex right and it never felt so difficult!”

Ultimately, it was Zelos’s consistency that allowed him to conclude his three-year Mini Challenge journey with title glory, as he finished every race of 2021 inside the top eight. Bird, however, was left reeling when guest team-mate Jack Mitchell unceremoniously took him out of the race-two lead of Brands in June and meant he had to fight from the back in the third contest. Without that, it could have been a different story, such were the fine margins that settled this championship’s destiny.

STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Dan Zelos	694
2	Max Bird	687
3	Lewis Brown	624
4	Jack Davidson	624
5	Max Coates	610
6	Sam Weller	607



“I’VE NEVER WORKED SO HARD TO GET EVERY APEX RIGHT AND IT NEVER FELT SO DIFFICULT”

BRITISH FORMULA 4

Any championship where all 20 drivers take a podium during the season and there are 11 different race winners, sounds like a difficult title to win. At times, you could even say it felt like no one really wanted to take British Formula 4 glory – particularly at a Silverstone event where all the frontrunners were involved in scrapes. Yet Matthew Rees was able to surprisingly seal the crown with a race to spare.

The car racing rookie had a tricky spell during the middle of the year but emerged from that in style at the penultimate Donington Park weekend, grabbing two wins and storming from a pitlane start – after a clutch failure – to seventh in the reversed-grid contest. Those results propelled him back into the points lead and, when closest rival Matias Zagazeta spun off in the opening race of the Brands Hatch finale, two fifth places were enough for JHR driver Rees to become champion.

The Welshman announced himself on the single-seater scene by taking five of the first six qualifying-based poles of the season. “To go to the first race and put it on pole was a confidence boost for the rest of the year,” says Rees, who had merely been targeting the rookie title pre-season.

But, after his strong start, Rees feels the slump was down to a loss of focus. “We spent too much time thinking about other things rather than ourselves,” he admits. “We were focusing too much on the championship.”

He was not the only one to suffer a mid-season dip. James Hedley was the early star but a tricky Knockhill and a disastrous move from Fortec to Carlin left him battling at the back – he slipped to fifth in the standings. While he was struggling, Argenti driver Zagazeta was growing ever stronger until he made that crucial Brands error and allowed Rees to end the Ford-backed, RacingLine-managed F4 era on top.



STANDINGS		
POS	DRIVER	POINTS
1	Matthew Rees	331
2	Matias Zagazeta	306
3	McKenzy Cresswell	305
4	Joel Granfors	240
5	James Hedley	226
6	Joseph Loake	199

AUTOSPORT'S TOP 10 DRIVERS



ASTON MILLAR

1 Ginetta Junior racers do not usually head this top 10, but it's hard to ignore Millar's performances this season. Finishing all bar the final race inside the top six in a category renowned for its unpredictability is an outstanding achievement and one that Millar deserves recognition for. You certainly would never have guessed consistency was his weak point last year as he ended the season with the second-highest win percentage of the five champions. And it was a truly family celebration with his dad as his mechanic.



DAN CAMMISH

2 Incredibly tough call between Cammish and Hanafin for the number two ranking but it *just* goes to the Porsche Carrera Cup GB champion. Compared to Cammish's other titles – which featured domination from the start – this was won in a very different way. Did not always have the fastest car but drove with maturity in a competitive field to keep bagging points. Had the highest podium percentage of all the champions as his decision to step back to Porsches was vindicated with historic third crown.



LORCAN HANAFIN

3 In many ways, Hanafin *should* have beaten his more illustrious rivals to this year's Carrera Cup title. He was the quickest – never qualifying lower than third – and won the most non-reversed-grid races of all. Clearly, his focus on simulator work in the off-season paid off, notching up plenty of preparation – including between his lockdown school lessons. But a mixture of bad luck and tiny errors ultimately cost him both in this top 10 and in the final standings. Nevertheless, he should still be proud of a brilliant season.



ADAM SMALLEY

4 Smalley's greatest battle this season was, arguably, getting on the GT4 Supercup grid at all. Only a late deal with a new sponsor secured his place but, from then on, he was always favourite to triumph. And that is exactly what he did, despite the narrow points gap to Tom Hibbert for much of the year disguising Smalley's superiority. Has the highest win percentage (30%) of all the champions and is only not further up this list because some of his fellow title winners had more top-quality opposition.



LIAM MCNEILLY

5 In a normal Ginetta Junior season, a driver who did not have a single DNF, whose lowest finish was 10th, who took a giant leap forward from an average rookie campaign and was involved in some thrilling lead fights would be heaped with praise. But, sadly for McNeilly, this was a distinctly abnormal Ginetta Junior year and Millar took many of the plaudits. Ultimately, a tricky opening Thruxton event proved costly for McNeilly in his battle with Millar but there were still plenty of positives from Snetterton onwards.



MATTHEW REES

6 Out of all the drivers on this year's British F4 grid, congratulations to anyone who picked out Rees as the champion pre-season. The second-year drivers started as favourites and, for much of 2021, proceedings went as expected. But Rees proved his double Thruxton pole in May was no fluke and continued to stay in the mix, digging himself out of a tricky run of events mid-season to coolly take the spoils when Matias Zagazeta clumsily threw it all away at the Brands Hatch finale – no mean feat for a rookie.



DAN ZELOS

7 Someone must be the lowest-ranked champion and, unfortunately for Zelos, that happens to be him. But that should not detract from what was a very strong season. A large part of his lower ranking is because, despite being the pacesetter for much of the year, it all came down to a tense finale. And he just drops behind Rees because this was his third season in Minis compared to it being the F4 champion's first. Zelos added standout results to consistency to be a deserving victor, keeping his cool in that Brands decider.



MAX BIRD

8 This was a coming-of-age year for Bird in the Mini Challenge, who joined his third different team since moving to the series for 2019 and seemed to find his home at Excelr8. Impressively kept pace with team-mate Zelos and never gave up on the crown. Took advantage of Zelos's difficult Donington and nudged himself ahead going into the decider. It could easily have ended differently when so many cars were battling so closely but someone has to lose out in those circumstances, and that proved to be Bird.



TOM HIBBERT

9 Moving to title-winning Rob Boston Racing and a switch to a fiery livery were signs of Hibbert's burning desire to step up a level this year, and he was unlucky to miss out on runner-up in the final GT4 Supercup standings. Did not quite have the outright pace of Smalley – as shown by two front-row starts compared to Smalley's six – but, whenever the Elite driver erred, Hibbert was there to pounce, creating an intriguing title fight. That was until a disappointing Donington allowed Smalley to finally pull clear.



KIERN JEWISS

10 There were plenty of contenders for the final spot, but British F4 runner-up Matias Zagazeta carelessly throwing away his title hopes and Ginetta Junior star Callum Voisin's mixed second half of the season meant Jewiss just gets the nod. Considering he was adapting to the Carrera Cup from single-seaters and was up against some talented drivers, he made the switch seamlessly. Beating team-mate Harry King to third in the standings was a strong result, and he defended well en route to four reversed-grid wins.



AUTOSPORT

AWARDS 2021



The 36th edition of the Autosport Awards represents a move back to the event's traditional location of the Grosvenor House Hotel on London's Park Lane on Sunday 19 December. The COVID-19 pandemic meant that last year the Grosvenor's red carpet remained untrodden by the stars of motorsport, with the event taking place online. But now it will be unfurled again.

Before that, we've got a little request for our readers. We need you to vote, and over the following pages you will see the nominees for International Racing Driver of the Year, British Competition Driver of the Year, UK National Driver of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Racing Car of the Year, Rally Driver of the Year, Rally Car of the Year, plus the Esports Driver of the Year.

You can vote for the candidate you think performed best in each category during the season. The winners will be announced on 19 December, across multiple digital platforms including [autosport.com](https://www.autosport.com), as well as in Autosport magazine.

The annual extravaganza has been one of the highlights of the year for four decades, and attracts key motorsport figures, including Formula 1 champions and World Rally stars. As well as the awards voted for by you, it will include the Aston Martin Autosport BRDC Young Driver of the Year Award, plus the Autosport Gold Medal incorporating the Gregor Grant Award for lifetime achievement and the Pioneering & Innovation Award incorporating the John Bolster Trophy for technical achievement.





INTERNATIONAL RACING DRIVER

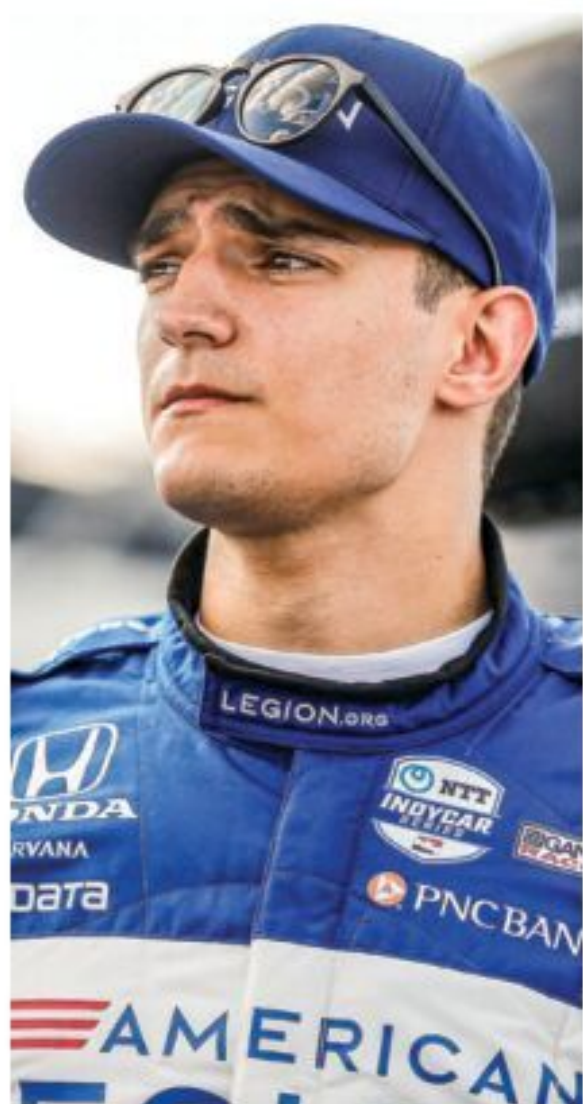
PRESENTED BY **PIRELLI**

Open to professional racing drivers competing at an international level



LEWIS HAMILTON

As usual, the knighted seven-time world champion has been leading the charge for Mercedes. As is not usual, there are serious doubts in 2021 as to whether he has the fastest car. Five wins to date means he trails Verstappen by 19 points with four races to go.



ALEX PALOU

Was quick and savvy on his way to the IndyCar title in just his second season in the US. Impressively, he was new to several circuits that dropped off the calendar in his rookie year due to COVID. Even more impressively, he put talismanic team-mate Scott Dixon in the shade.



MAX VERSTAPPEN

With the Red Bull chassis and Honda engine on song this year, he has finally been able to mount a concerted F1 title challenge. Eight proper wins (plus Spa) means he holds a slender advantage over Hamilton as we enter the final furlongs.



NYCK DE VRIES

Making this a 50% Dutch contest and a 50% Mercedes shootout is the Formula E champion. Sporting regulations made the electric series a bit random, but the 2019 F2 title winner scored two wins and put together as consistent a campaign as possible to triumph.



INTERNATIONAL RACING CAR

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MERCEDES-EQ SILVER ARROW 02

Look beyond de Vries's Formula E title victory and you'll see that this machine was also saddled by Venturi Racing's runner-up Edoardo Mortara. Add in their respective team-mates Stoffel Vandoorne and Norman Nato, and it won five of the 15 races in the hands of four different drivers.



MERCEDES W12

This car has allowed the Brackley team to lead the F1 constructors' standings at present as it bids for an incredible eighth successive title. In the hands of Hamilton and Valtteri Bottas, it has scored six GP race wins to date and has topped qualifying eight times as the team vies with Red Bull.



RED BULL RB16B

With Verstappen leading the points, it's arguably the relative performances of Bottas and Sergio Perez that mean Red Bull has trailed in the constructors' standings for much of the campaign. Even so, Perez has contributed to the 10 (including Spa) GP wins to date, with the team on resurgent form.



TOYOTA GR010 HYBRID

There were doubts whether this trailblazer for the Le Mans Hypercars movement could even beat the LMP2 cars. But of course it has done this quite comfortably, and six out of six WEC wins – including the blue-riband 24 Hours – mean Toyota has picked up in LMH where it left off in LMP1.



INTERNATIONAL RALLY DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to professional or semi-professional rally drivers in international events



ELFYN EVANS

Our 2020 Award winner is once again in the thick of the WRC title fight heading into the finale at Rally Monza. A strong late-season run of form with Toyota has moved him ever-closer to team-mate Ogier in the points, and included a win in Finland to add to his earlier Portuguese success.



THIERRY NEUVILLE

Another year of 'what if?' for the bespectacled Belgian, who was one of the victims of a run of Hyundai problems that befell both himself and Ott Tänak. As ever, he has shown blistering speed when everything is working, and took a home win on Rally Ypres and scored in Spain.



SEBASTIEN OGIER

The brilliant Ogier is in prime position to add an eighth WRC crown to his tally. His second season with Toyota brought four victories from the opening six rounds. He's failed to win across the last five, but road-sweeping duties as series leader bring a toll.



KALLE ROVANPERÄ

The hype about this Finnish teenager had been deafening for years. And guess what: he has absolutely justified it. On his first full season in the top-class WRC ranks with Toyota, he has scored two wins in Estonia and rocky Greece. Titles are surely not far away.



RALLY CAR

OF THE YEAR

Open to cars competing in rallying from international to national level



FORD FIESTA WRC

The M-Sport-built machine doesn't have the results this year of Toyota or Hyundai, but it's been youngsters Adrien Fourmaux and Gus Greensmith in the driving seat. The best rally has been their impressive Safari 4-5, with Greensmith just ahead and both within two minutes of victory.



HYUNDAI i20 COUPE WRC

The South Korean marque is only just in with the slightest of mathematical chances of the WRC manufacturers' crown, but the i20 has been arguably the fastest car of the year, with 109 stage wins to the 97 of the Yaris (and one of the Fiesta). Has propelled Neuville and Ott Tanak to three wins.



MINI JCW BUGGY

It seems a little bizarre to describe a car that could probably accommodate an entire Mini Miglia grid as a Mini, but there's no denying that it's a mean rally-raid weapon. The big one is, of course, the Dakar Rally, and the JCW Buggy carried Stephane Peterhansel to victory and Carlos Sainz to third.



TOYOTA YARIS WRC

While the Hyundai has the edge on fastest stage times in 2021, the Yaris has been the trusty steed of choice for getting to the end of WRC events in first position. This it has managed on eight out of 11 occasions this season, meaning it's an all-Toyota fight for the drivers' title.



BRITISH COMPETITION DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to British drivers competing in categories at international level



MIKE CONWAY

Firmly established as a star exponent of top-flight WEC competition, Conway has at last taken that long-coveted maiden Le Mans 24 Hours victory with Toyota. Along with co-drivers Kobayashi and Lopez, he also took a second consecutive World Endurance drivers' crown.



JAKE DENNIS

The only people surprised by his stunning rookie Formula E season will be those who didn't know him. Dennis didn't have the glamour feeder-series titles on his CV, but superbly scored two wins with BMW Andretti on his way to third in the points standings.



LANDO NORRIS

He's just getting better and better with McLaren in F1, and the fact that he didn't take the marque's first GP win in nine years was very much against the run of play. As it is, Norris has scored four podiums in 2021 and was just a bad pit call away from his maiden F1 success in Russia.



GEORGE RUSSELL

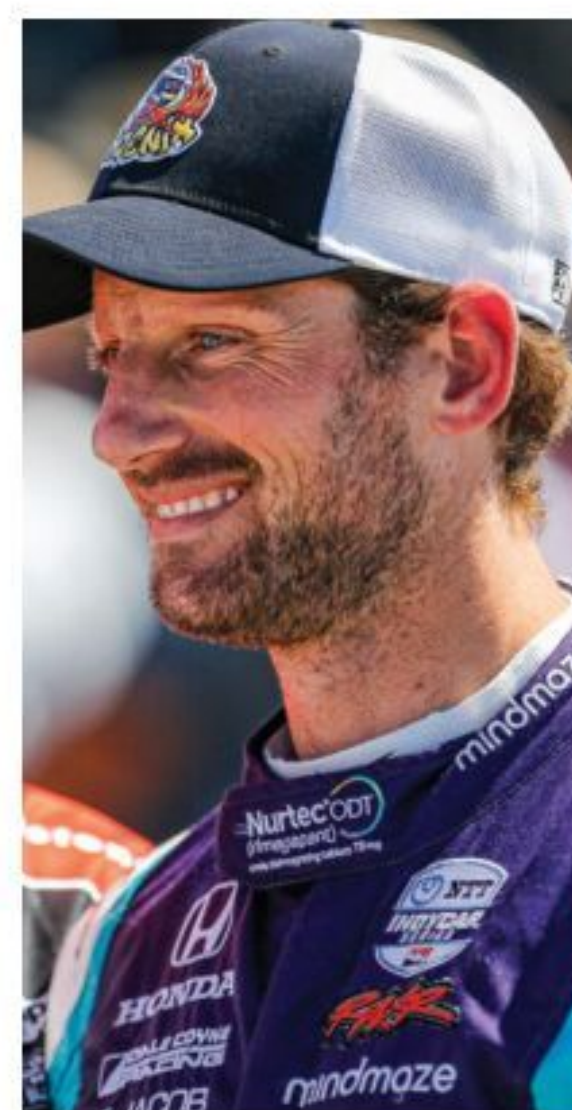
With Williams, he had no chance of running at the front as he had with Mercedes in the 2020 Sakhir GP. Hang on a minute... Absolutely stunning tricky-weather qualifying showings at Spa and Sochi showed why he fully deserves his Merc seat for 2022.



ROOKIE

OF THE YEAR

Open to professional drivers in their first season in their respective categories



ROMAIN GROSJEAN

He didn't win the IndyCar rookie title, but almost certainly would have done had he not skipped the first three oval races. Made a great impression with Dale Coyne Racing after being let loose from F1, and scored three podiums as well as a maiden pole at Indy.



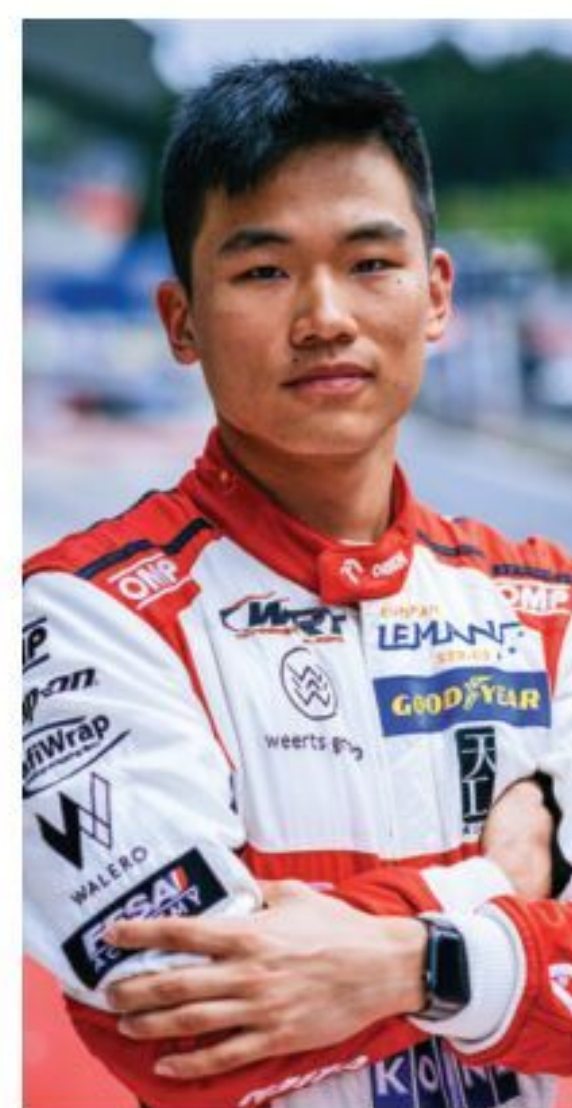
OSCAR PIASTRI

The ludicrous F2 calendar in 2021 means the racing is still only 75% done. The 2020 winner of this Award for his FIA F3 exploits has been a star of F2 on his graduation with Prema Racing. He has a strong points lead, with three wins (two in feature races) as well as three successive poles.



MICK SCHUMACHER

It was a bit of a hiding to nothing to be entering his rookie F1 season in the slowest car on the grid in the form of the Haas. He's done a thoroughly respectable job to get through to Q2 on a couple of occasions, and has outperformed teammate Nikita Mazepin.



YIFEI YE

Of the single-seater graduates flooding the LMP2 ranks in a bid to get noticed for the Hypercar future, this Chinese 21-year-old has been superb. Claimed the European Le Mans Series title with Robert Kubica and Louis Deletraz, and last-lap heartbreak robbed them of a Le Mans win.



NATIONAL DRIVER

OF THE YEAR

Open to drivers racing in the BTCC, British GT or at FIA F3 level



DAN CAMMISH

The Porsche Carrera Cup GB was vastly more competitive than when this BTCC refugee last contested it in 2017. Winning umpteen races was therefore no longer an option, but he allied consistency with pace and became champion for the third time. Also scored a podium on a BTCC one-off.



JOSH COOK

Crept from under the radar to snatch third place in the BTCC – and the honour of top front-wheel-drive runner – from under the noses of Tom Ingram and Jake Hill. And nearly stole second from Colin Turkington. His tally of five wins in the BTC Honda was matched only by Sutton.



DENNIS LIND

The Dane was the pro keystone to his British GT title with Leo Machitski in the Barwell Lamborghini set-up. Such are the vagaries of the sporting regulations that they could only take one win – at Spa – but they scored well elsewhere and Lind very much did the heavy lifting.



ASH SUTTON

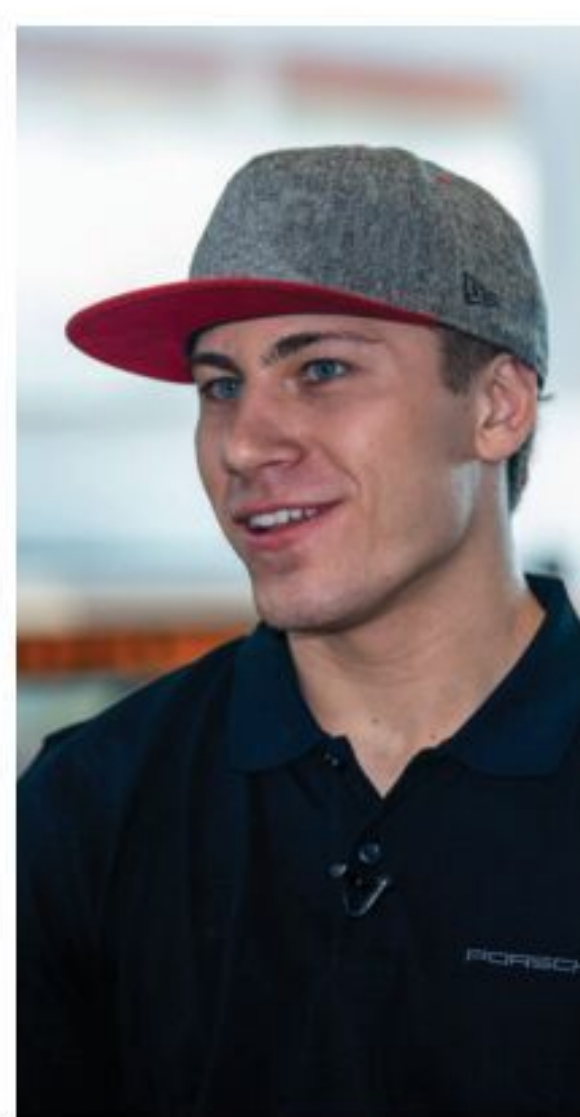
Executed an almost-perfect season within the constraints of the BTCC rules to clinch the title with a race to spare at the wheel of his BMR/Laser Tools Racing Infiniti. He played it cautiously with success ballast, but unleashed ferocious speed when he could build up an irresistible force.



ESPORTS DRIVER

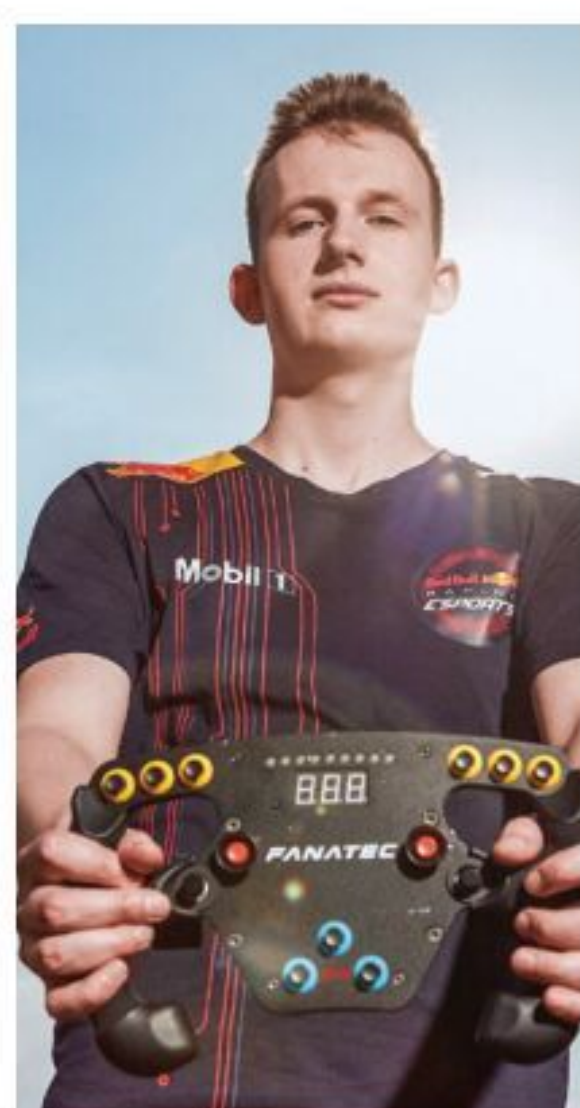
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MITCHELL DE JONG

The former XGames rallycross champion is now one of the stars of Esports. In 2021, the Coanda Simsport driver underlined his pace across disciplines as he finished second in the Porsche Esports Supercup and third in the eNASCAR iRacing Series.



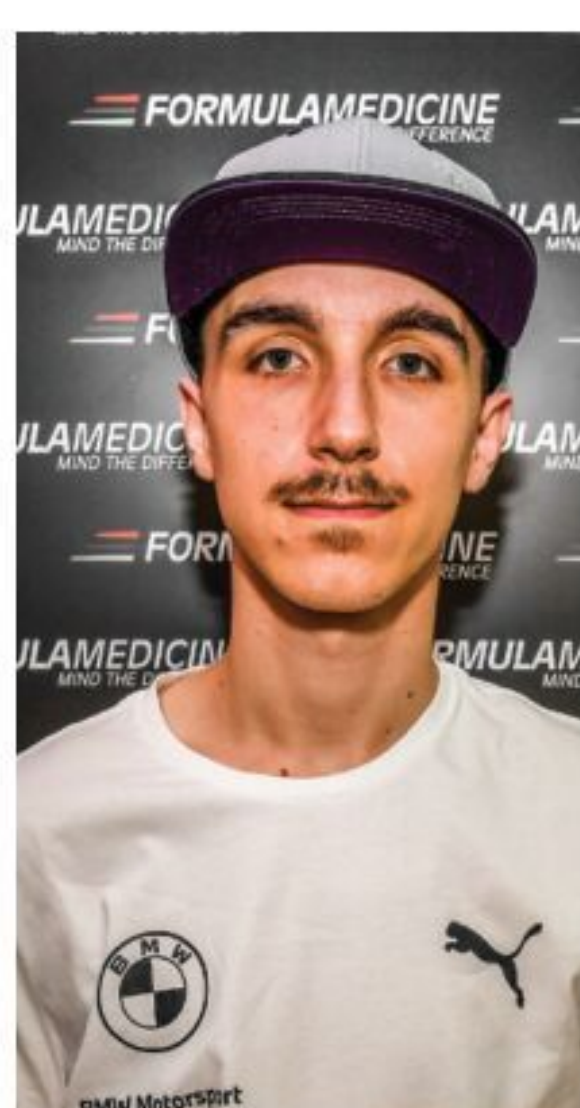
FREDERIK RASMUSSEN

The Red Bull Racing Esports driver took an incredible victory in the Formula E: Accelerate championship on the rFactor 2 platform, which earned him €20,000 and a drive in a Gen2 car. His showings so far this year in the F1 Esports Series appear to herald a title challenge.



JOSH ROGERS

After missing out on the Porsche Esports Supercup title last year to our 2020 Award winner Sebastian Job, Rogers hit back by becoming champion for the second time and banking \$50,000 in the process. Rogers has also made a successful return to endurance competition.



KEVIN SIGGY

The 22-year-old continued his superb performances in top Esports series in 2021. Despite losing his Formula E crown, the Team Redline driver has proved to be an endurance master in the Le Mans Virtual Series, with both fine single-lap pace and excellent fuel saving.

HOW TO VOTE

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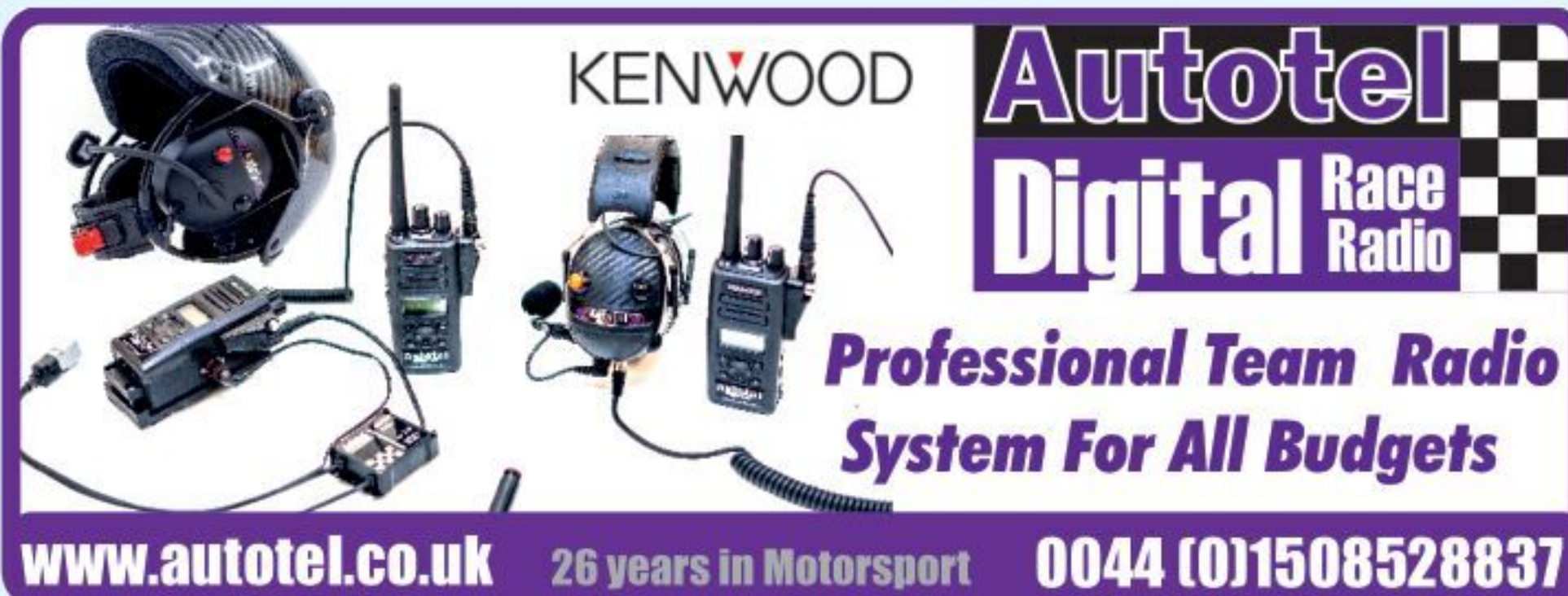
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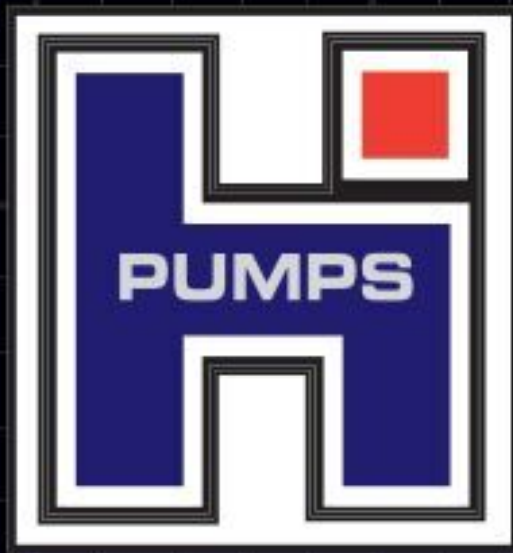
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- Accountability for the condition and appearance of the car which should be maintained to the highest levels at all times.
- You will be expected to be an integral part of the team, take part in pit stops and assist other team members in various tasks as required.
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GB3 Ginetta Junior star Voisin first to sign with Carlin

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Thruxton again features on CSCC's 2022 schedule, before longer-haul trips are planned the following year

CSCC PLANS USA EVENTS IN 2023

CSCC

The Classic Sports Car Club has revealed its 2022 calendar, which includes a two-day Thruxton meeting and a return to Spa, while also announcing that it will run special events at Daytona and Sebring in November 2023 to celebrate its 20th anniversary.

The provisional schedule for next year begins with a two-day Snetterton fixture on 2-3 April before being "very honoured" to secure two of just a handful of race dates at Thruxton later that month. Also featuring on the calendar are trips to Anglesey, Brands Hatch Indy, Castle Combe, Oulton Park, Donington Park, Silverstone and Cadwell Park. It will be the club's first time racing on

Silverstone's National layout for six years.

The traditional early summer trip to Spa is also back, coronavirus permitting, on 23-26 June, having been absent for the past two years. But a long-planned Le Mans visit has been put back to 2024 amid track activity being suspended during next year's French election.

"We've been stymied by COVID and a lot of people are desperate to go back to Spa again," said CSCC director Hugo Holder. "There's a lot of pent-up demand."

The club has also been keen to look to the future and inform members of its plans for its anniversary year in 2023, so they can book holidays and prepare budgets accordingly. There will be races at Historic

Sportscar Racing-organised events at Daytona on 4-5 November followed by Sebring on 25-26 November.

These will only be available to drivers who have taken part in a certain number of UK CSCC events beforehand, and Holder added there would be plenty of track time so everyone can be catered for.

"We've been to Daytona before and that was a great success," he said. "We thought long and hard about whether we do something different. We looked at the logistics and the timing and Daytona seemed to fit. The feedback has been amazingly positive and we're very much looking forward to it."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

HSCC offsets carbon produced during 2021

HSCC

The Historic Sports Car Club has revealed that it has offset all of the carbon emissions produced during its 2021 racing season.

At a time when the issue of global warming and protecting the planet is firmly in the spotlight thanks to the United

Nations climate summit in Glasgow, the HSCC has decided to play its part by offsetting the carbon emitted from its race meetings via a tree-planting scheme.

"We've offset 100,000 miles of carbon emissions," said HSCC CEO Andy Dee-Crowne. "We know the number of cars we've got, we know the length of



the circuits and we know how many laps they've done. We worked that out and added in our officials travelling to and from meetings.

"We then added a margin for error and have offset

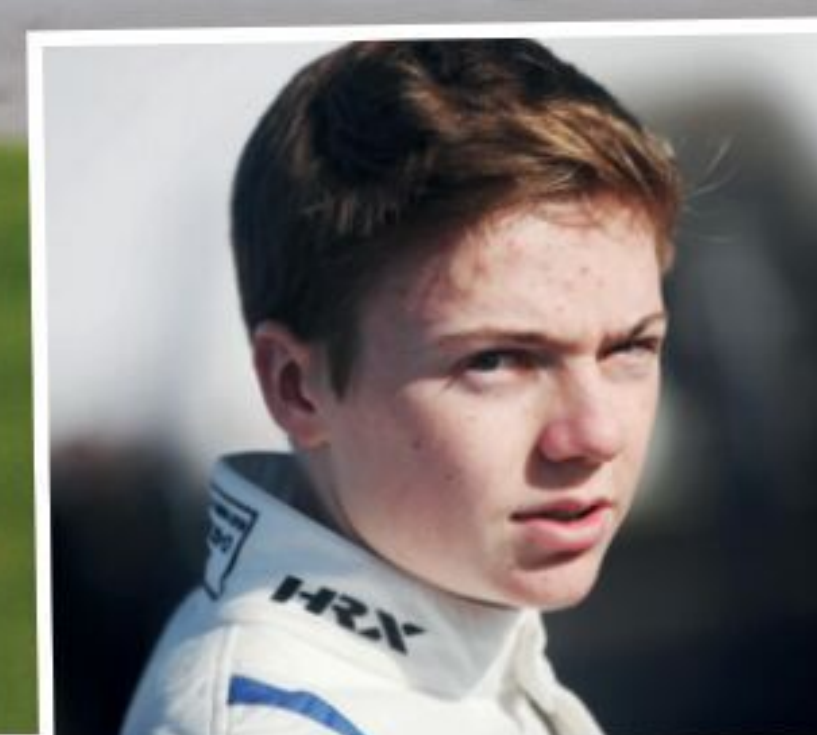
those carbon emissions according to DEFRA guidelines. As a club, we want to try to do something proactive – we try to do as much as we can."

STEPHEN LICKORISH



Voisin (inset) is set to follow in footsteps of ex-R Racing driver O'Sullivan

Voisin moves to single-seaters with Carlin in GB3 for 2022



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

GB3

Ginetta Junior star Callum Voisin will make the jump up to GB3 next season with leading team Carlin.

Voisin was the driver to beat during the opening half of the Ginetta campaign, despite being a car racing rookie and going up against more experienced rivals, taking seven victories. But a combination of a 70-point penalty for a technical infringement, bad luck and other drivers taking notable steps forward meant he slipped to sixth in the final standings.

It was while Voisin was assessing his options in the wake of the points deduction that he first considered the possibility of switching to single-seaters.

"After Snetterton, when we had that problem [penalty], we were trying to see what our options were for the rest of the year," said Voisin. "We tried an F4 car and that went really well and, about a month after that, I tried the GB3 car and that also went really well. We decided to finish off the Ginetta season and I was keeping in touch with Carlin.

"I don't think I would've considered it [without the test]. With my brother doing GT4 [Bailey Voisin was European GT4 champion this year], I would've probably just gone down that route and that's why I'm so thankful I got that test."

Voisin becomes the first driver announced as racing in GB3 next season and joins the Carlin squad that powered

fellow R Racing Ginetta Junior graduate Zak O'Sullivan to this year's title. But Voisin is under no illusions about the leap up the ladder he is making.

"It was a bit of a rocket, going from 100bhp to 230bhp with slicks and wings – it was quite a jump but it was a lot of fun," he said of the test. "The racing driver in me wants to go out and win all the time. But it's going to be a steep learning curve next year, learning the whole single-seater side of motorsport.

"We've got a really good team behind me – one of the best, if not the best, on the grid. There's no reason why I can't be up there. I'm very excited – I don't think I've ever been so excited to get started."

STEPHEN LICKORISH

Edgar to return after licence ban

GINETTA JUNIOR

Ginetta Junior race winner Tom Edgar will return to action in this weekend's Winter Series at Brands Hatch after serving a three-month ban.

Edgar, the son of ex-Formula Ford ace Michael, was one of the leading contenders in the main championship this year before picking up a 12th point on his licence at Oulton Park in August, which triggered an automatic three-month suspension.

Northern Irish racer Edgar now returns to

R Racing and is one of just two previous race winners among the 19-driver Winter Series entry, alongside 2021 championship runner-up Liam McNeilly (Fox Motorsport).

Joining Edgar at R Racing – the team that powered Aston Millar to the crown – will be Josh Rowledge, who moves across from Elite Motorsport. Rowledge is the only driver aside from McNeilly from the top 10 of the main championship standings on the Winter Series grid.

Meanwhile, 15-year-old karter Alisha Palmowski has been chosen as the next



JEP/MOTORSPORT IMAGES

Ginetta Junior Scholar after a three-day assessment process at Blyton Park last week. She impressed in a range of driving, fitness and media assessments and has secured a fully funded drive in the series for 2022.

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IN THE HEADLINES

ROADSPORTS FOR BMW

A new BMW 1 Series model is set to be introduced next season in the 750 Motor Club's Roadsports series. The F20/21 chassis will have more performance than the models used in the 116 Trophy due to its turbocharged engine, capable of 240bhp, with the hope being that a 116 Sprint series will eventually be created for the newer model.

CLARK BACK ON TRACK

Kieren Clark, the 2009 Formula Renault BARC champion and now a driver manager, made his Fun Cup debut in the final round of the year at Donington Park last weekend. "I don't know how I really got into this as I haven't raced anything for over 10 years," he said. Sharing EDF Motorsport's car with Porsche Sprint Challenge racer Kurt Leimer, they finished eighth in the four-hour race.

NO REST FOR RESCUE CREW

The British Racing & Sports Car Club East Anglian Centre's rescue unit crew completed an additional early morning task last Saturday while en route to Donington Park for the Fun Cup meeting. At 0530, they encountered a burning vehicle on the A14 near Bury St Edmunds and the crew stopped to put out the fire. All five people in the car escaped unhurt and a replacement fire extinguisher was given to the unit when it arrived at Donington.

PEARSON JOINS EXCELR8

Mini Challenge racer Ronan Pearson will switch to Excelr8 Motorsport in the series next year, joining the British Touring Car Championship squad's young driver programme. Pearson (below) finished eighth in the points with LDR Performance Tuning in his second season racing Minis in 2021, taking a best result of second on the opening weekend at Snetterton.



Newer 197 model introduced for Clio Sport Championship

750MC CLIOS

The 750 Motor Club will introduce a new model to its Clio 182 Championship next season, while also renaming the series as the Clio Sport Championship.

The popular category has been running for the past eight seasons as a standalone series solely with the Renault Clio 182 variant but, from 2022, it will be joined by the more modern 197 chassis.

The new car has been tested by technical partner K-Tec Racing, with an example competing in the 750MC's Hot Hatch Championship this season, and the newer and older models are expected to be evenly matched on performance.

"It's a new era for the championship,"

said 750MC commercial manager James Winstanley. "It's not intended as a replacement for people that are currently racing 182s, it's just another option. Anyone coming in fresh to the Clio Championship has got two different options. And they're pitched at the same sort of performance over the course of the season."

The decision to introduce a new model has been made with the price of 182s rising and parts becoming harder to source. "There's plenty of 197s out there – they're at the right kind of price, plenty more spares," added Winstanley. "Some people prefer the newer shape. It's a different audience. Some people want that fresher, newer race car."

STEFAN MACKLEY

Chris Smith 1944-2021

OBITUARY

Westfield Sports Cars founder Chris Smith, who has died aged 77 after battling prostate cancer in recent years, redefined the kit car industry with his high standards and innovative technologies.

That he was an extremely competent driver who raced Chevron B8s – he shared James Tangye's car at Vila Real in 1969 – and Derek Matthews's Arksprite internationally into the 1970s was key to establishing the brand.

His track experience, which continued with various Lotuses and Tony Mantle's F3 Chevron B17, and race preparation

expertise imbued Westfield cars with giant-slaying dynamics.

Smith built his first car – a Lotus 11 clone – at home in 1982. When his first customer dropped out, Lotus specialist Paul Matty snapped it up. Autosport was among the first magazines to drive the BMC-powered pair at Donington Park.

Demand rocketed and full-scale production of the subsequent Seven-esque Westfields was moved to a state-of-the-art factory in the West Midlands. Many thousands were built before the company was sold to former Rolls-Royce and Lucas Aerospace director Frank Turner in 2006.

MARCUS PYE

Continuation Rouse RS500s to be built

HISTORIC TOURING CARS

Three continuation Ford Sierra RS500 Cosworths will be built for historic touring car racing this winter.

They will be created by Alan Strachan, founder of CNC Motorsport AWS, and endorsed by Andy Rouse, who headed development of the car in the British Touring Car Championship in period. The cars will be built from original shells to the specification used by Andy Rouse Engineering and will have a £185,000 price tag.

Strachan worked for Rouse in the RS500 era, and the build programme will have access to drawings and data to produce Rouse-specific parts, including the Rouse-designed steel rollcage.

Each car will use a fresh 575bhp Cosworth YB unit with input from original engine builder Vic Drake, who produced over 100 RS500 powerplants.

"The RS500 was lots of fun and, of all the cars I raced, the Kaliber RS500 is the one I



Three cars to be built from original shells and will be signed off by Rouse

wish I still had today,” said Rouse. “When Alan told me he had acquired a brand-new bodyshell, we came up with the idea to build correct continuation cars just as we did in our Binley workshop. Having seen Alan develop his engineering business, he was the only person I trusted to build cars that would carry the ARE build plate.”

Strachan said “demand for competitive Group A machines is rising”, therefore creating more opportunities for the cars to race at prestigious events. “RS500s are great

fun to drive, relatively easy to maintain and considerably more affordable to run than Super Touring cars,” he added. “RS500s are also a great draw for the fans that fondly remember these fire-breathing monsters. The cars will be all signed off by Andy, just as we did in period.”

Rouse took two BTCC class titles at the wheel of an RS500 as the machines dominated the top division of the championship between 1988 and 1990.

PAUL LAWRENCE

Tordoff joins forces with Jordan Racing Team



Ex-BTCC racer was third in
JRT-run Cobra in Pall Mall Cup

HISTORICS

Former British Touring Car racer Sam Tordoff made his AC Cobra debut in the Pall Mall Cup at Silverstone at the end of last month as part of his new association with the Jordan Racing Team.

Tordoff joined Michael Cullen and Paddy Shovlin to help take the Irishmen's

JRT Daytona Cobra Coupe to third overall in the three-hour race. Tordoff's Ford Falcon will be rebuilt this winter by the Jordan squad ahead of a full Masters Historic Touring Car campaign next season.

"JRT is looking after a couple of my cars now so that's where the relationship started and already I'm being given opportunities

like this, so I'm super-grateful and we'll see where it takes us," said Tordoff, who only drove the Cobra for the first time on the Friday before the meeting.

Tordoff says that running at the front of the Masters series is his ambition for the 2022 season along with any other opportunities that come along.

PAUL LAWRENCE



Wins for Vitols and Thorne as Tohill takes lead

BRITISH RALLYCROSS

Rising rallycross stars Roberts Vitols and Jack Thorne claimed a victory each in the British Rallycross Championship 5 Nations Trophy double-header weekend at Lydden Hill, but Derek Tohill was the big winner in the title fight as he took the series lead.

Tohill entered the weekend 10 points behind Ollie O'Donovan but, by outqualifying his Irish compatriot, then finishing higher in both finals, the double European champion left Kent with a three-point advantage. With the planned final round at Spa cancelled and 5 Nations BRX bosses working on an alternative venue for the finale, that points swing could prove critical.

O'Donovan's Ford Fiesta led the final in round six from the start, chased by Tohill's Fiesta and returnee Thorne (Peugeot 208) on the opening lap. But Vitols was on a charge after a qualifying littered with mechanical issues on his Citroen C4, cutting inside Tohill and Thorne to claim second. When O'Donovan took his joker on the next tour, Vitols had the lead.



Two Lydden Hill podiums have aided Tohill's title campaign

5 NATIONS BRX

Behind the new leader, O'Donovan returned to the main circuit alongside Tohill and the title rivals clashed on the run to Devils Elbow, O'Donovan being forced out of contention with three punctures. Vitols, meanwhile, scored his third victory of the campaign, ahead of Thorne and Tohill.

Entering Sunday's final, Tohill and O'Donovan were tied on points and Tohill made the best launch. Thorne took his joker on lap two and nailed a near-perfect lap to pass both Tohill and Vitols when they too took their jokers on the penultimate tour and claimed a maiden career win. O'Donovan finished fifth.

HAL RIDGE

IN THE HEADLINES

NEW DATE FOR McRAE RALLY

Knockhill will host the McRae Rally Challenge on the opening weekend of July next year, two years after its original date to mark 25 years since Colin McRae's only World Rally title success. The event had been scheduled to take place in October 2020, before being postponed by a year due to COVID-19. It was then pushed back a further 12 months because of travel restrictions between the UK and Australia, where McRae's brother Alister is based.

AMAZING AMAZON DUO WINS

Paul Dyas and Martyn Taylor took victory on the 2021 RAC Rally of the Tests aboard their Volvo Amazon, after battling through 29 tests and 22 regularities over three and a half days. The duo beat father and daughter Darell and Nicky Staniforth, who made their debut on the event in their Morris Mini Cooper S.

FROM CAMERA TO ACTION

Ace photographer Jakob Ebrey had a busy Walter Hayes Trophy event last weekend. As well as capturing the action, he also took a class win on a rare outing in his Porsche 944 in Saturday's Closed-Wheel Allcomers race. The contest was won by Tony Hunter's Renault Clio.

MARTIN'S TRABANT BID

Daredevil Guy Martin has taken part in many risky challenges while pursuing a television career, but undertook one of the most bizarre when he raced a Trabant at Brands Hatch last weekend. The former motorcycle racer drove one of three of the East German two-stroke machines (below) in the first of two Allcomers' handicap races. It proved a gruelling introduction, Martin lapping the Indy circuit nearly 40 seconds slower than the fastest qualifier. Despite this, Martin was leading the race on handicap, according to the timing screens, when his car expired.



HAWKINS

Bird off to a flying start in Fiesta as Circuit Rally season begins

RALLYING

Frank Bird and Jack Morton took their Ford Fiesta to a dominant win on the Neil Howard Stages at Oulton Park last weekend, the first round of the *Motorsport News* Circuit Rally Championship.

Bird was fastest on all eight stages, and Joe Cunningham/Josh Beer (Fiesta) proved to be an equally comfortable second, albeit over a minute down on Bird.

Kevin Procter/Derrick Fawcett were

third after the first two tests, but a jump-start penalty on stage three preceded their disqualification for taking the wrong route.

Fiesta crew Neil Roskell/Shawn Layland gradually consolidated third over the rest of the day, with former champion Barry Morris's Darrian T90 GTR+ fourth.

Having entered his Escort rather than his Fiesta R5, defending champion Mark Kelly started well, but retired from sixth on stage three after hitting a gatepost.

PETER SCHERER

There was no stopping Bird, who was quickest on every stage



LAWRENCE



Time for a judicial review

The delayed start to the Walter Hayes Trophy final is the latest occasion that suggests it's time to reassess UK motorsport's judicial process and make it more efficient

STEPHEN LICKORISH

The British Racing Drivers' Club grandstand at Silverstone for the Walter Hayes Trophy is one of the best places to watch motorsport in the UK – and one of the liveliest. After a year where spectators were banned, the stand was virtually full for the Formula Ford 1600 event on Sunday. Despite the cold, there were all the usual cheers for a great overtake, gasps when contact was made and enthusiastic applause at the end of races. But it was no exaggeration to say the loudest cheer, with the nearby marshals joining in, came when the engines fired up on the cars in the assembly area ahead of the final – after a 45-minute wait.

The delay to the headline race was somewhat farcical. The Hayes builds towards a crescendo and, after two thrilling historic finals – one of which was decided by 0.004 seconds – the grand final was eagerly anticipated. But ongoing judicial protests meant a grid had not been set and the race could not begin.

These hearings concerned two semi-final incidents. We won't go into the details here, but both decisions were appealed and, given the outcome would determine the final's grid, proceedings were held up. But the second semi-final finished at exactly 1pm, giving two hours for the incidents to be investigated, penalties applied, appeals to be lodged and stewards to make a ruling. It ultimately took a snail-paced two hours and 45 minutes.

"We wanted to give all parties a right and proper hearing,"

"There is an appeals culture prevailing where slam-dunk decisions are still protested"

explains Historic Sports Car Club CEO Andy Dee-Crowne, who was part of an eight-strong team of clerks and assistant clerks on duty. "Had we started with a grid that was not correct, we could've been protested after the race for not carrying out the proper investigations. The judicial process had to be carried out.

"There's a lot of evidence-gathering when there's an appeal. I would love to have done it a lot quicker but, in fairness to all competitors, with such a high-profile event, we have to do everything correctly and by the book."

That is understandable and it was imperative the process was completed pre-race to avoid trouble later. But the problem was the time this took. Given this is a progression event where the outcome of one race sets the grid for the next, surely there should have been a greater urgency to begin investigations. Yet the initial

penalties were not issued until 2.30pm – 90 minutes after the races concluded. Can you imagine it taking that long to determine a penalty in football or a wicket in cricket, even in a world of video assistant referees and umpire decision reviews? So, why should things take so long in the fast-paced motorsport environment?

Dee-Crowne says a deadline was set for proceedings to be concluded by 3.45pm and that was just about met. But it left perilously little time before the light faded. Had there been a red flag, it is possible the final may not have been restarted. All the waiting in the cold was also not fair on the impressive marshals, who had been the most efficient I have seen at a race meeting, and on the drivers – some of whom returned to the pit garages. Despite this criticism, the same race control team deserves praise for running with so few hold-ups that Saturday's action finished 50 minutes early, and Sunday's got back on track after a lengthy delay when a Monoposto car caught alight.

Being a clerk of the course can be a thankless task and certainly is not easy. And, as a sport, we are desperately short of top-quality officials – something Motorsport UK urgently needs to get to grips with. But that does not mean clerks cannot be criticised. Autosport has written plenty of times this year about mix-ups and delays in race control and standards have to be improved.

Perhaps it is time for the governing body to conduct a wider review of the judicial process. There is an appeals culture prevailing where some slam-dunk decisions are still protested, particularly when teams are involved and feel they have to stand up for their driver. Maybe a radical switch is therefore needed. As a suggestion, for major 'National' permitted meetings, a panel of three clerks not involved in overseeing the races could make the judicial calls together and their decisions are final – removing stewards' involvement – thereby negating the need for lengthy appeals that often prove a waste of time. If more fundamental concerns exist, these could be taken to the National Court. It took a pandemic for national motorsport to finally ditch antiquated paper methods and join the 21st century. And other aspects of race meetings maybe also need bringing up-to-date.

Returning to last weekend, the person I feel sorriest for is James Beckett. The Walter Hayes Trophy organiser did a tremendous job in attracting a 103-car entry – larger than the Festival the week before, despite the effort put in for the 50th edition – and yet the delays were entirely outside of his control. Thankfully, the final was worth waiting for. It may not have been the greatest of the 21 over the years, but it had a thrilling conclusion as long-time leader Max Esterson was so nearly defeated. And that good racing is exactly what the Hayes *should* be all about. ❧

➔ **P80 WALTER HAYES TROPHY REPORT**

Team Murray comes out on top in Fiestas

MONDELLO PARK
MPSC
7 NOVEMBER

It was a Murray Motorsport front-row lockout for the Mondello Park Fiesta 6 Hour Endurance race, with team owner Eoin Murray just pipping 2013 British Touring Car champion Andrew Jordan to pole. Experienced saloon racers Johnny Whelan and Barry Rabbitt shared row two, with many expecting an early attack to stop the Murray cars making a break.

As the safety car pulled off and the 24-car train headed toward the rolling start, the ever-opportunistic Rabbitt made his move. He crossed the line almost level with the front-row occupants and managed to scrabble round the outside to take the lead out of Turn 1.

He was a little too enthusiastic at Turn 3, however, and when he slid a touch wide, Murray took the place back. Rabbitt stayed in the leader's wheeltracks for the entire first stint, the duo eventually pitting with a lead of over 10 seconds from Jordan, who was well clear of a hectic five-car battle.

At the halfway mark the leader was still the Murray Motorsport car, which Eoin was sharing with former National Hot Rod



Class of the field in the annual six-hour race was Murray's team

World champion Shane Murphy and Barry English. Jordan, teamed with Michael Cullen and Dave Maguire, had climbed to second, with Johnny Whelan, Rob Whelan and Johnny Taylor in third.

Rabbitt's car suffered a rear wheelbearing failure, but the team received a new one from the retired LOH Motorsport car in the same garage, allowing them to reach the finish, albeit in 12th. Murray's team made no mistakes, though, to cross the line one lap clear of William Kellett, partnered with fellow Mondello instructor Jack Byrne and former Irish Saloon champion Tomas O'Rourke. Jordan, Cullen and Maguire had to be content with the final podium spot.

LEO NULTY

WEEKEND WINNERS

MONDELLO PARK FIESTA 6 HOUR ENDURANCE

Murray Motorsport
(Eoin Murray/Shane Murphy/Barry English)

For full results visit: timing.ie

DONINGTON PARK FUN CUP ENDURANCE

Enduro Motorsport
(Morgan Tillbrook/Marcus Clutton)

ST-XR CHALLENGE

Race 1 Chris Grimes (ST)

Race 2 Chris Jones (ST)

For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

Donington delight again for Tillbrook/Clutton

DONINGTON PARK
BRSCC
6 NOVEMBER

Enduro Motorsport's Morgan Tillbrook and Marcus Clutton were winners last time out in British GT at Donington Park, and their return to Fun Cup action at the Leicestershire circuit proved equally successful.

Newly crowned champions UVio/Hofmann's Lotus, with Scott Fitzgerald

and Fabio Randaccio, led PLR's Neil Plimmer/Ben Pitch by nine seconds with 20 minutes of the four-hour race to go.

But, when Randaccio had a trip across the Old Hairpin grass, it tore off the splitter and reduced the gap to 5.3s, with Clutton closing on both. He soon grabbed the lead and his advantage suddenly grew when Randaccio and Plimmer collided at the chicane.

Randaccio was out, stuck in the gravel, and Plimmer received a drivethrough penalty, which left MakeHappen Racing's

Greg Evans duelling with MJ Tec GITI's Scott Jeffs for second. Evans just held on to retain the place alongside Neil Burroughs, while Jeffs and Callum Cripps took third.

PLR pair Plimmer and Pitch claimed fourth, with Stobart Sports' Colin Kingsnorth and Richard Webb and early leader CCS Media, comprising Nigel Greensall, Alan Honarmand and Bob Tomlinson, completing the top six.

Chris Grimes and Chris Jones shared the ST-XR Challenge spoils. Michael Blackburn led the first race until Grimes took charge at Redgate on lap three of 11 and pulled away. Jones finally snatched second exiting Coppice late on, with Blackburn and Lee Bowron completing the top four, after Sam Beckett went off at McLeans on the last lap.

After a safety car, Jones hit the front in race two but was chased all the way by Grimes as his victory gave him the title.

PETER SCHERER



American dream for Esterson as he lands Walter Hayes Trophy glory



SILVERSTONE HSCC WALTER HAYES TROPHY 6-7 NOVEMBER

It's pretty much the last thing you want before starting on pole position for the Walter Hayes Trophy final in just your first full season of racing in the UK. As if the thought of keeping a field packed with previous event winners, Formula Ford Festival victors and a host of Formula Ford champions behind you is not pressure-inducing enough, adding a tense 45-minute wait in the assembly area for the grid to be finalised amid ongoing protests takes the pre-race anxiety up to a whole new level. "It definitely didn't help the nerves," admitted that polesitter, Team USA Scholarship driver Max Esterson.

Yet there was no need for the Low Dempsey Racing man to be concerned. He headed into the final in a rich vein of form, having taken impressive wins in both his heat and semi-final to secure that crucial pole position in his Ray GR18. And he then went on to produce a consummate display, only briefly losing the lead, to become the first American to win the Hayes since Tristan Nunez in 2012.

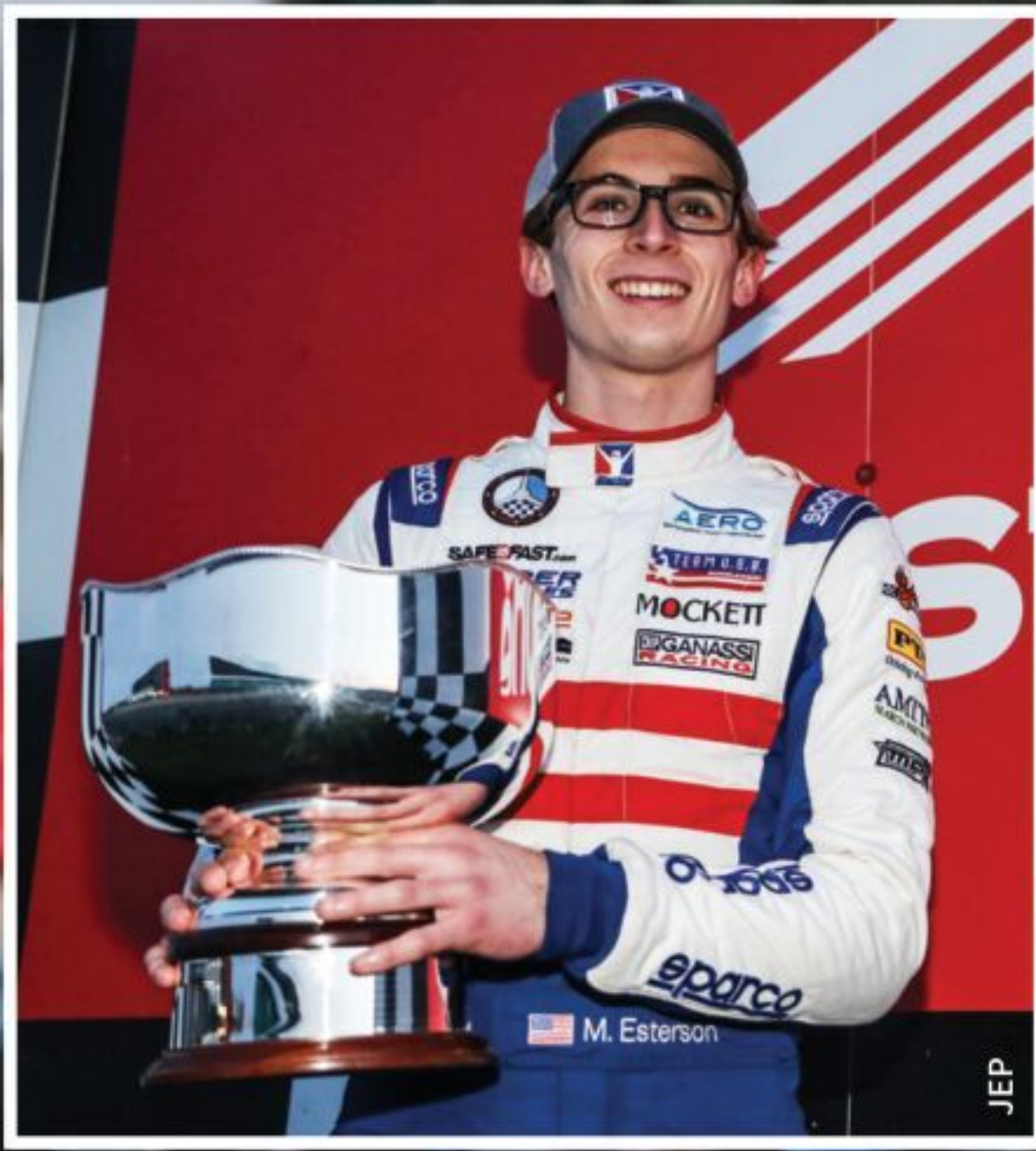


One of the key moments of the final: Smith sends Moyers spinning as Middlehurst (left) pounces

But it could all have been very different. Two-time event winner Michael Moyers started alongside Esterson on the front row – he'd matched his feat of winning a heat and semi – and got the better launch, diving up the inside into Copse. Esterson held on around the outside, but Moyers believed Esterson ran wide off the track in doing so and gained a crucial advantage. "That changed the whole dynamic of the race," said Moyers. Instead of fighting for the lead, the Spectrum driver had a whole queue of cars jostling to deprive him of second.

And that allowed Esterson to establish a crucial advantage. With Moyers coming under repeated attacks, notably from last year's Festival victor Rory Smith around the outside of Brooklands, Esterson was able to build a half-second margin. "Max was just edging away and everyone was fighting, going four wide down the Wellington Straight and I'm thinking, 'We're giving Max an easy win here – what are we playing at, what are we doing?'" said Moyers.

Matters came to a head on lap five of 15. Smith made another attempt around the



Esterson celebrates with the trophy (inset) after leading almost all of the delayed final

outside of Brooklands and kept the inside approaching Luffield. Neither driver was prepared to back out and significant contact sent Moyers spinning and left Smith out. Unsurprisingly, each driver blamed the other and both – justifiably – felt they were denied the chance to give Esterson something to think about. “It’s just one of those things,” said Moyers, who continued racing out of pride to finish 29th and believed he had been driving better than ever this year. Smith added: “I wanted to get ahead of Moyers to bridge the gap to Max. I gave it my all and it didn’t quite happen.”

Therefore, instead of his rivals closing, Esterson had extended his lead to 1.4s. It looked like game over, his advantage gargantuan in terms of Formula Ford racing at Silverstone. But Chris Middlehurst had other ideas. This year’s National champion was in the right place to profit from the Moyers/Smith collision and quickly started hunting down Esterson. “I saw that [clash] coming and went to the inside and read that well,” said Middlehurst.

Behind, last year’s winner Oliver White (Medina JL17) and the impressive Ben Mitchell (Van Diemen JL16) were engaging in their own tussle, Wayne Poole Racing >>

ESTERSON AND COWLEY TURN UP THE HEAT IN OPENER

Max Esterson’s path to Walter Hayes Trophy glory got off to the strongest possible start by winning the first heat of the weekend from pole, but it was the most competitive contest in the opening round and he faced stiff opposition from British GT4 frontrunner Matt Cowley.

Although the American made the best getaway, Cowley presented an immediate threat and he dived ahead at Becketts to lead on lap two. Esterson retaliated at Brooklands on the following tour and there were a couple more exchanges before Esterson capitalised when Cowley went wide there on the penultimate lap.

Cowley almost struck back on the run to the line, with Esterson finding oil at Luffield, but Esterson prevailed by 0.015 seconds over Cowley, who was pleased to make a rare direct progression to the semi-final. Luke Cooper had his strongest showing of the weekend, running with the top two throughout in his Swift SC20 but lacking straight-line speed, while Ivor McCullough (Van Diemen RF00) fought back to fourth after unaccountably going out to qualify on a full wet set-up and thus starting from row seven.

Heat three pitted two recent WHT winners against one another and also produced the most notable elimination of the heat phase, when the clutch on Felix Fisher’s Ray GR05 exploded towards the end of lap one. Michael Moyers and Ollie White therefore edged clear of the rest. White, the 2020 WHT victor, seemed content to sit behind the 2017 and 2018 winner at first, but mounted more of an attack as the eight laps wore on, although all of his attempts came to nothing.

Esterson’s Team USA team-mate Andre Castro was third on the road, but track-limits infringements cost him four places and promoted Champion of Snetterton Ben Cochran (Van Diemen BD21) to third,



Esterson and Cowley spent much of first heat side by side

having driven around the outside of Jack Wolfenden’s Firman RFR17 at Brooklands.

Rory Smith led the fourth heat from pole but had to contend with Wayne Poole Racing team-mates Josh Fisher and Ben Mitchell. After they arrived at Brooklands three wide on lap two, four-time WHT podium finisher Fisher emerged in front with historic ace Mitchell just behind him. That’s the way it stayed until the final lap, when Mitchell outbraked himself at Brooklands, allowing Smith back through to second. Ian Campbell produced one of the surprises of the round, taking a comfortable fourth in his Ray GR08.

Earlier, Chris Middlehurst comfortably won heat two after passing the Spectrum of Canadian Megan Gilkes on the second lap. Joey Foster relieved her of second place at Becketts on the final tour. The rapid Tom Mills spun his Spectrum at Brooklands on the first lap, and threaded his way back through to seventh.

Felix Fisher had Tom McArthur – who missed Saturday’s action – for company as he stormed through the Progression and Last Chance races. Fisher won both, and progressed to the final, and McArthur was only just behind in each race, but he exited at the semi-final stage when he spun his Medina JL17 into the gravel at Becketts on the final lap of the second race.

IAN SOWMAN



Fisher leads Smith (right) and Mitchell (left) in entertaining heat-four scrap

driver Mitchell initially getting third on the inside of Becketts, before White retaliated a few laps later with a brilliantly executed dive down the inside at Brooklands.

As this pair began closing on the leaders, Team Dolan ace Middlehurst was right with Esterson with three laps to go and drew his Van Diemen LA10 alongside on several occasions. Then, on the final lap, he edged ahead approaching Becketts, only for Esterson to outbrake him into the corner in a move he feared would end in disaster. But, before Middlehurst could fight back, suddenly he was down to fourth on the Wellington Straight. “Going from third to fourth, I missed a gear and that dropped

me back,” Middlehurst explained.

That meant Esterson was able to cross the line just 0.249s clear of White and Mitchell to take a well-deserved win.

“I don’t believe it,” enthused Esterson. “It definitely helps after finishing second last weekend [in the Festival] – that hurt a lot. I had a good lead but the tow is so huge here and I couldn’t get away.”

White was delighted with second after starting down in eighth, stating: “I don’t think I could’ve got much more out of it.” And Mitchell rounded out a happy podium, after entering with no expectations but ending the event as one of the stand-out stars. “I was going in with an open mind,”

he said, having enjoyed the battle. “It was very close – not an inch was given.”

Middlehurst therefore had to settle for fourth, while Josh Fisher grabbed fifth from Lucas Romanek’s Oldfield Motorsport Van Diemen JL15 on the final lap to add to the Wayne Poole team’s successful event, this duo finishing some way clear of the squabbling Joey Foster and Matt Cowley, who had made contact earlier in the day. “I will take that after getting knocked out in the semi-final,” said Fisher, who started 12th. “I thought I would sit back and watch it all happen and managed to pick them off.”

Cowley and Foster’s semi-final collision was triggered by Tom Mills, and Mills’s appeal of his 13s penalty contributed to the farcical delay to the final. The 16-year-old had shown impressive pace throughout the weekend but had a habit of getting into scrapes. And that was again the case in the final when he and Jonny McMullan (Van Diemen LA10) collided at Brooklands, leaving McMullan out and Mills finishing 19th. This meant David McCullough (Rfoo) and Felix Fisher – who battled through the repechage races after car woes (see heats report) – were able to complete the top 10.

But it was Esterson who was left to enjoy the largest celebrations, with those pre-race nerves well and truly banished to being just a distant memory.

STEPHEN LICKORISH



SEMI-FINALS PROVIDE GREAT RACING AND NOTABLE COLLISIONS

Some of the best racing of the weekend – and some of the most notable collisions – occurred during the semi-finals. While Max Esterson and Michael Moyers were again winners, their triumphs were far from straightforward and the pair enjoyed a combined winning margin of just 0.247 seconds.

Esterson got the jump on polesitter Chris Middlehurst at the start of the first semi-final, but the pair remained glued together for the rest of the race. Middlehurst



made a couple of attempted moves before diving ahead on the inside of Becketts on lap five of 10. But his lead only lasted two laps before Esterson blasted back ahead around the outside of Brooklands, while Middlehurst briefly dropped behind Tom Mills, but ultimately finished just 0.138s back from Esterson.

Mills was third but was demoted to 12th for his role in a tangle between three-time winner Joey Foster and Matt Cowley exiting Brooklands. While Mills continued his charge, Foster’s Don Hardman-run Firman was left with a damaged nose and Cowley’s Van Diemen RF15 spun back to an eventual 11th. The action ahead meant Lucas Romanek was promoted to third, while Jonny McMullan headed an entertaining six-car scrap for what became fourth.



Moyers lost the lead at the beginning of the second semi-final to fellow front-row starter Josh Fisher, and he needed some good fortune to reclaim the advantage. Rory Smith’s Medina also got ahead of Moyers around the outside of Brooklands and began challenging Fisher’s Van Diemen, but it ended in tears at Luffield when Smith’s move on the inside sent Fisher spinning. “I think it was just a racing incident,” said Fisher. “We were fighting for

the lead of a semi-final, so you’re not going to give much room.”

But, regardless of who was to blame, the clash allowed Moyers back into a lead he kept to the flag, while Ben Mitchell grabbed second after running three-abreast with Smith and Oliver White into Brooklands on the final tour. Ben Cochran took a strong fifth, while Fisher passed Team USA Scholar Andre Castro at Becketts to limit the damage in sixth.

STEPHEN LICKORISH

SILVERSTONE
WEEKEND WINNERS

JEP

WALTER HAYES TROPHY

Heat 1 Max Esterson (Ray GR18)**Heat 2** Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10)**Heat 3** Michael Moyers (Spectrum 011)**Heat 4** Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF99)**Progression race** Felix Fisher (Ray GR05, above)**Last Chance race** Felix Fisher (Ray GR05)**Semi-final 1** Max Esterson (Ray GR18)**Semi-final 2** Michael Moyers (Spectrum 011)**Final (15 laps) 1 Max Esterson (Ray GR18);**

2 Oliver White (Medina JL17) +0.249s; 3 Ben Mitchell (Van Diemen JL16); 4 Chris Middlehurst (Van Diemen LA10); 5 Josh Fisher (Van Diemen RF99); 6 Lucas Romanek (Van Diemen JL13).

Class winner James Tucker (Van Diemen RF92).**Fastest lap** Matt Cowley (Van Diemen JL15)1m01.321s (96.30mph). **Pole** Esterson.**Starters** 36.

JEP

JANET CESAR TROPHY

Heat James Tucker (Van Diemen RF92, above)**Final** Brandon McCaughan (Mondiale M89S)

CARL HAMER TROPHY

Heat & Final Samuel Harrison (Merlyn Mk20)

CLOSED-WHEEL ALLCOMERS

Race 1 Tony Hunter (Renault Clio)**Race 2** Chris Porritt (Chevron B19, below)

MONOPOSTO TIEDEMAN TROPHY

Races 1 & 2 George Line (Dallara F308)

PRODUCTION ENDURANCE RACE

Timothy Creswick

(Porsche 718 Cayman GT4 Clubsport)



JONES

For full results visit: tsl-timing.comMcCaughan heads a whole
swarm of cars in hotly contested
Janet Cesar Trophy final

JONES

McCAUGHAN AND HARRISON THE WINNERS
OF HISTORIC THRILLERS

Ballymena 17-year-old Brandon McCaughan topped his rookie FF1600 season with victory in a hugely competitive Janet Cesar Trophy for Pre-'93 cars, in which the top nine were covered by 2.6 seconds at the end.

Driving a Mondiale M89S, McCaughan was having just his second race event away from Kirkistown, where he finished fourth in the Northern Ireland championship. He started the final in third by finishing on the podium in Saturday's heat, which in its own right was a brilliant result because he had started on row six and been 14th at the end of lap one. He overtook five cars on the second lap and then made steady progress until the final circuit when he made contact with Cam Jackson's Van Diemen RF90 when going for second at Becketts, sending Jackson skittering back to 19th.

Darwin Smith was leading that race when a front rose joint failed on his RF90 – recently acquired from Portugal with fewer than 20 events under its belt – at Copse. Starting from the back of the final, Smith got as far as Becketts before tangling with Paul Tucker's Swift SC92. Tucker's son James had taken victory in the qualifier in his Van Diemen RF92, defeating Ben Tinkler (Reynard 89FF) by 2.4s, although the relatively comfortable margin belied the nature of the contest.

Tinkler retook the lead of the final from Tucker at Copse at the beginning of the fourth lap and, although Tucker fought back, the move was sealed at Brooklands and McCaughan followed him through.

McCaughan then drove around the outside of Tinkler at Copse to take the lead at the start of lap five, with Tucker reclaiming second at Becketts. But it did not stay that way for long, as Tucker got back into the top spot at Brooklands on lap seven of 12. By that time, Jordan Harrison had got his Reynard 89FF into victory contention and he took third from McCaughan at Becketts on the ninth lap.

Indeed, McCaughan still lay fourth halfway

around lap 11, but he arrived at Brooklands abreast with three others and somehow came out in front. Jackson, who'd climbed from row 10, banging wheels with Richard Higgins's Van Diemen RF88 along the way, bounced back similarly, appearing at Becketts on the final lap in second position. But Tinkler outdragged him on the run to the line, while Tucker had to make do with fourth and Harrison fifth.

The Carl Hamer Trophy contests for Pre-'82 machinery were every bit as exciting, with Samuel Harrison taking victories in both races on his first outing for Classic Team Merlyn.

On his return to racing after suffering from long COVID, Richard Tarling (Jamun T2) grabbed the lead from Harrison's Mk20 at Becketts on lap one, then Patrick McKenna took his Crossle 35F around the outside of both of them at Brooklands. Harrison and Tarling were back ahead by Becketts on lap two, and Harrison stayed in front until the eighth lap when he and Tarling delayed each other and allowed Ed Thurston to pounce in his Merlyn Mk20A.

But the lead continued to change, Tarling hitting the front again, then Harrison, before – on the final lap – Tarling seemed to do enough to snatch victory with a brilliant move around the outside at Brooklands. Harrison got a good run through Woodcote, though, and after some thought the timekeepers gave him the win by 0.004s from Tarling, with Thurston and McKenna third and fourth.

IAN SOWMAN

Tarling (left) and Harrison
were inseparable all event

JEP

Four wins at Brands Hatch helped Smith take another Truck crown



Smith secures sixth British Truck title

**BRANDS HATCH
BARC
6-7 NOVEMBER**

A sell-out crowd at Brands Hatch on Sunday witnessed Ryan Smith fight back from a points deficit to claim his sixth British Truck Racing title in a row after a frantic finale. The return after two years of MotorSport Vision's fireworks spectacular helped ensure a bumper turn-out, with the headline truck races supported by a packed programme on and off the track.

In a season dogged by reliability problems, Smith came to Kent third

in the Trucks table behind David Jenkins and Martin Gibson. Smith qualified fastest and Stuart Oliver was second despite only one flying lap. Jenkins was next, but Gibson's third-row spot was left empty after he struggled to the pits with a gearbox problem. He was given a reprieve, though, when Shane Brereton plunged off at the first corner and brought out the red flags.

Gibson's repairs were completed before the rerun, which was dominated by Smith with Jenkins a distant second. John Newell and Gibson contested third, while Oliver retired with overheating.

Race one's order was reversed for the grid in race two, but Oliver was a spectator

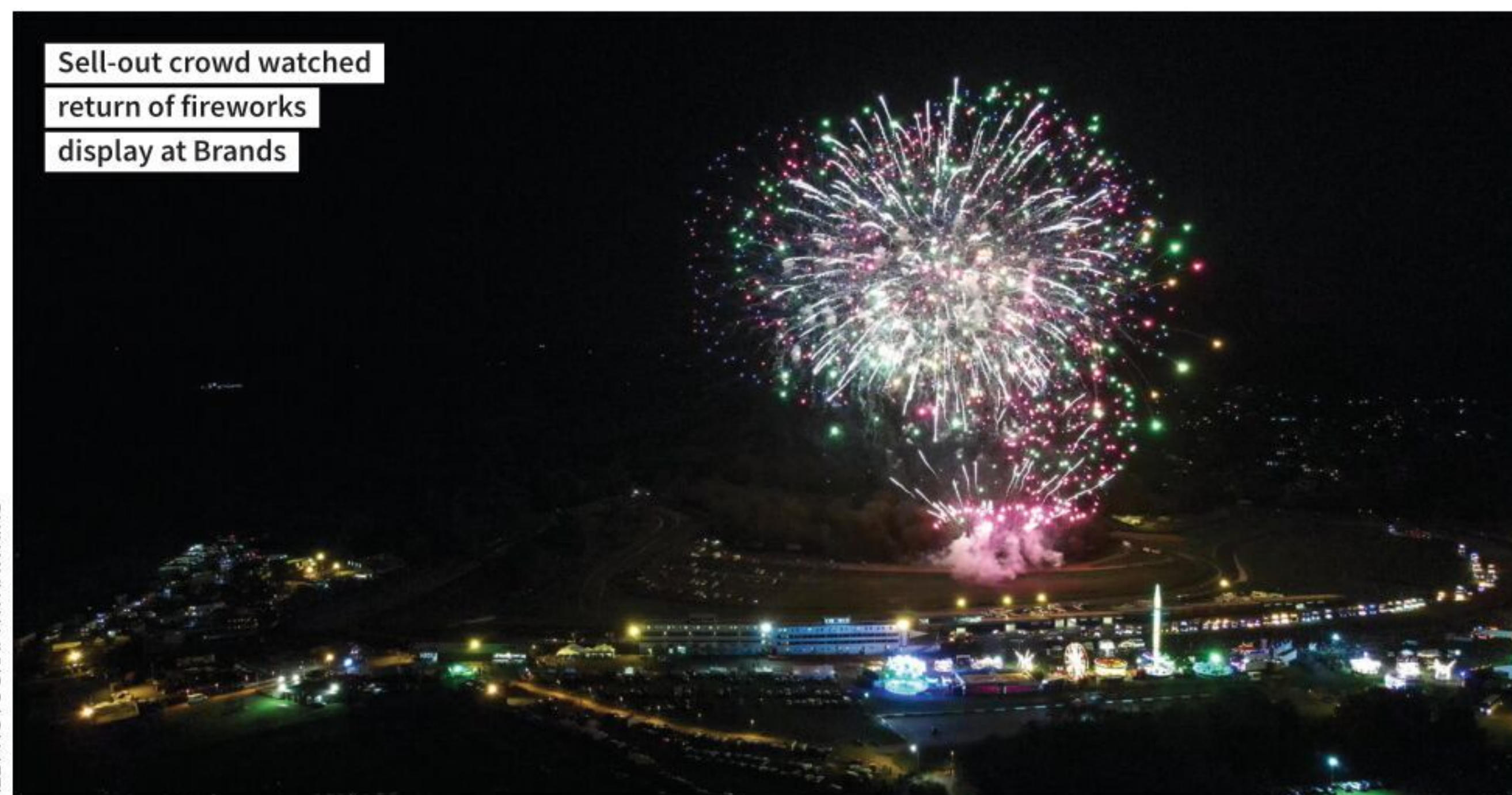
after his problem was diagnosed as a cracked cylinder head. Smith won again after starting seventh, but Jenkins's hopes were dashed by a first-lap trip through the Paddock Hill gravel. He recovered to third behind Gibson despite grappling with broken rear suspension, but was promoted to second when Gibson was disqualified for overspeeding. Meanwhile, second in class to Willem Breedijk guaranteed Craig Reid the Division 2 championship title.

Smith and Jenkins were on equal points on Sunday morning and, while Smith stormed to another win from eighth, Jenkins struggled to finish sixth. Gibson was fifth, but his title hopes were already over because of his earlier disqualification.

Jenkins made the most of a front-row start in race four and soon headed into the distance. Smith was also on a charge, eventually being classified fifth, but Brereton and Reid came to grief separately on fluid dropped at Druids, bringing the race to a halt.

This set up a tense final with Smith defending a one-point lead, although he started with a grid advantage over Jenkins (third versus seventh). Smith hit the front on lap two, but the decisive moment came two laps later when Jenkins jostled Mark Taylor onto the grass at Surtees and the errant truck slammed into Jenkins as it rejoined. Remarkably, these two and innocent victim Steve Thomas all

Sell-out crowd watched
return of fireworks
display at Brands



ALL PHOTOGRAPHY: HAWKINS



Smith overturned points deficit



Claxton came out on top of second Allcomers race



Rudman (7) also secured another title in Legends despite only one win

continued, but by now Smith was long gone in the lead and secured another title.

Division 2 provided an exciting battle, which ended with Steven Powell beating Reid, Simon Cole and Brad Smith, the group also having to contend with the recovering Taylor and Jenkins.

Legends points leader Miles Rudman suffered in the first of Saturday's trio of races, two caution periods hampering his efforts to move up from a lowly grid spot. He finished sixth in the opener, before race two yielded second place. Rudman finished ninth in the final, the three wins shared by Sean Smith, Will Gibson and John Mickel.

Rudman won Sunday's opening race and tied up this year's championship in a typical slipstreaming battle with Gibson and Jack Parker. Rudman looked set to win the second heat as well, but Dan Clark swooped past on the final lap. Mickel, Gibson, Smith and a closing Rudman crossed the line in that order in race three in a blanket finish.

New Junior Saloon champion Charlie Hand only missed the podium at one event all year, and he completed a triumphant season with two more wins. Harvey Caton lost any lingering chance of overhauling his rival with a grassy moment and a pitstop in the first race. Stars of the Saturday encounter were Jamie Petters and Ruben Hage, who spent much of the race door to door and completed an entire lap side by

side before finishing third and fourth.

David O'Regan made only his second Pickup Truck appearance of 2021 and won the first race in unusually dominant fashion on the road, but a track-limits penalty dropped him to eighth in the results. Dean Tompkins passed father Paul at the last corner to be credited with the win, while Matt Simpson was close behind, despite a gearbox problem.

George Turiccki, 2019 champion before COVID-19 wrote off the whole of last season, was only going to be robbed of another crown if a whole list of unlikely events got in his way. And he stayed out of trouble to come home in fifth place.

Turiccki led from the start of race two, but the field was quickly brought under safety car control after Mark Willis, Michael Smith and Dean Tompkins tangled on the drop down to Graham Hill Bend. At the resumption, Allen Cooper led briefly before sliding off, and Simpson spun out of third after a bump at Clearways. This left Turiccki and O'Regan to trade the lead before the Irishman eventually gained some consolation for Saturday's disappointment with victory.

The Classic Touring Car Racing Club celebrated and honoured the contribution of marshals with a pair of Allcomers' races. Mike Saunders's V8 Ford Escort Mk1 was leading Rod Birley (BMW M3) and Gary Prebble (Honda Civic) on the road when

WEEKEND WINNERS

BRITISH TRUCKS

Races 1, 2, 3 & 5 Ryan Smith (Mercedes Actros)
Race 4 David Jenkins (MAN TGX)

LEGENDS

Race 1 Sean Smith
Race 2 Will Gibson
Races 3 & 6 John Mickel
Race 4 Miles Rudman
Race 5 Dan Clark

JUNIOR SALOONS

Races 1 & 2 Charlie Hand

PICKUPS

Race 1 Dean Tompkins
Race 2 David O'Regan

ALLCOMERS

Race 1 Scott Kirwan (Renault Clio)
Race 2 Colin Claxton (Ford Escort Mk1)

HYUNDAI COUPE CUP

Races 1 & 2 Alistair Dendy (below)



For full results visit: tsl-timing.com

the first race was stopped early to rescue Guy Martin's stranded Trabant 600RS. This made nonsense of the handicap system being applied on the timing screens. Scott Kirwan's Renault Clio, 32nd in qualifying, was declared the winner while Saunders, Birley and Prebble were classified 24th, eighth and 23rd respectively.

The woefully slow Trabants missed race two, which featured a superb duel between Malcolm Harding's Escort Mk2 and Sam Wilson in Rikki Cann's Aston Martin V8 Vantage. Despite their heroic efforts in traffic, they were classified second and third behind Colin Claxton's Escort Mk1, which was generously treated by the handicapper. Birley crashed on lap one after trying to pass Prebble.

Alistair Dendy beat Alex Cursley in a shortened Hyundai Coupe race after an opening-lap stoppage. Wayne Rockett kept them company in third. Red flags also interrupted race two, which was rerun for five minutes, giving Dendy another win over Cursley with two generations of the appropriately named Rocketts – son Jonny in front of dad Wayne – next along.

BRIAN PHILLIPS

Attention to detail is a highlight of the game, but it's let down by feeling unfinished



PROMISE NOT YET FULFILLED



VIDEO GAME
NASCAR 21: IGNITION
RRP £49.99

As a lifelong NASCAR fan, every NASCAR game release day was a holiday in this writer's household when growing up. With *NASCAR 21: Ignition*, the first in a line of reconstructed games built from

the ground up, the lead-up to the latest release has brought back those childhood times. Unfortunately, at the time of writing this, *NASCAR 21: Ignition* doesn't seem to be a vision realised.

When it works, it might be some of the most fun racing I've had on a NASCAR video game in years. But, there's a narrow operational window thanks to glitches, incomprehensible logic and missing features.

One main takeaway from playing the latest officially endorsed release is the attention to detail. Every track looks, feels and drives as you'd expect. From the simplest concepts, such as track geometry, to the complex NASCAR minutiae. Details like dust clouds at Sonoma, blades of grass on the Daytona infield and all the accessible garage areas are spot on.

The meat of *NASCAR 21: Ignition* is the Career

Mode. The premise is that your character is an up-and-coming driver ready to take on the NASCAR Cup Series, as the career storyline picks them up entering the pinnacle of the sport.

From contract negotiations, meeting goals, signing on with new teams and ultimately building up your Legacy Score, the *Ignition* career doesn't offer quite the detail that *NASCAR Heat 5* once did in terms of team building, rivalries, car performance or even the depth it had with multiple series and schedules.

The way the car handles is probably the most important aspect of it all. It varies depending on what method is being used, but even a controller user can have a fun time with the right settings and assists. I preferred the feedback I received from the wheel over a gamepad, as it felt like I had greater control of what I was doing. I could get loose, I could back up the corner for a better exit, and I could race the AI more competitively.

It should be noted, however, that wheel peripheral users without Fanatec equipment will have a harder time at present, and regardless of brand, you need your gamepad nearby to navigate the menus.

Your AI-controlled opponents are madder than a box of frogs at times. They act as if you aren't present, spearing into you and lacking any form of avoidance.



With work, this could be the start of a great new gaming franchise



They sadly add to the missed opportunity. The online action can be engaging, but it lacks enough options to make it worthwhile and, as a result, you'll often be paired up with people who aren't taking it seriously.

Players join a random lobby through the two playlist options – 'Shake and Bake', which tackles superspeedways and intermediates, or 'Bump and Run', which handles short tracks and road courses. While players can party up with up to 15 friends and then join the hopper system, there are no private lobbies.

The livery editor was highly anticipated among the NASCAR gaming community, but it is also lacking in depth at this time. It can yield beautiful results, but those schemes will only be there for single-player use. You can't use them in online races or share them with the community.

The biggest let down of it all is an unfinished feeling, from glitches to missing NASCAR rules. If the subsequent updates can fix the bugs, add depth, and keep improving through the off-season, *NASCAR 21: Ignition* has the potential to be a great start to this new gaming franchise.

If these fixes are left until *NASCAR 22*, however, many NASCAR gaming fans will be left wanting. It's what doomed other NASCAR gaming franchises. I only hope it doesn't spell doom for the *Ignition* series, because this has the potential to blow everything else out of the water.

Available now on PC, PlayStation and Xbox. For daily racing game news, visit Traxion.GG

JUSTIN MELILLO



youtube.com/AUTOSPORTdotcom



Max Verstappen secured a decisive Formula 1 victory at this year's Mexican Grand Prix, denting Lewis Hamilton's title aspirations on a day when Red Bull was dominant. In the latest edition of the Autosport podcast, host Ariana Bravo is joined by director of digital strategy Jess McFadyen and Autosport technical editor Jake Boxall-Legge to dissect the race. **Go to autosport.com/podcast**

WHAT'S ON

INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

Sao Paulo Grand Prix Formula 1 World Championship

Round 19/22
Interlagos, Brazil

14 November

TV Live Sky Sports F1,
Sun 1655

TV Highlights Sky
Sports F1, Sun 2300
Channel 4, Sun 2300

Australian Supercars Round 10/12

Eastern Creek, Australia

13-14 November

TV Live BT Sport 1,
Sat 0530, Sun 0215,
Sun 0530

Petit Le Mans IMSA Sportscar

Round 12/12
Road Atlanta, America
13 November

MotoGP

Round 18/18
Valencia, Spain

14 November

TV Live BT Sport 2,

Sun 1230

TV Highlights ITV4,
Mon 2230

UK MOTORSPORT

Anglesey BRSCC

Clubsport Trophy,
Race of Remembrance

Brands Hatch BARC

13-14 November

Britcar Trophy,
C1, Ginetta Junior,
Intermarque Silhouettes,
Mini Challenge, Super
Saloons/Tin Tops





FROM THE ARCHIVE

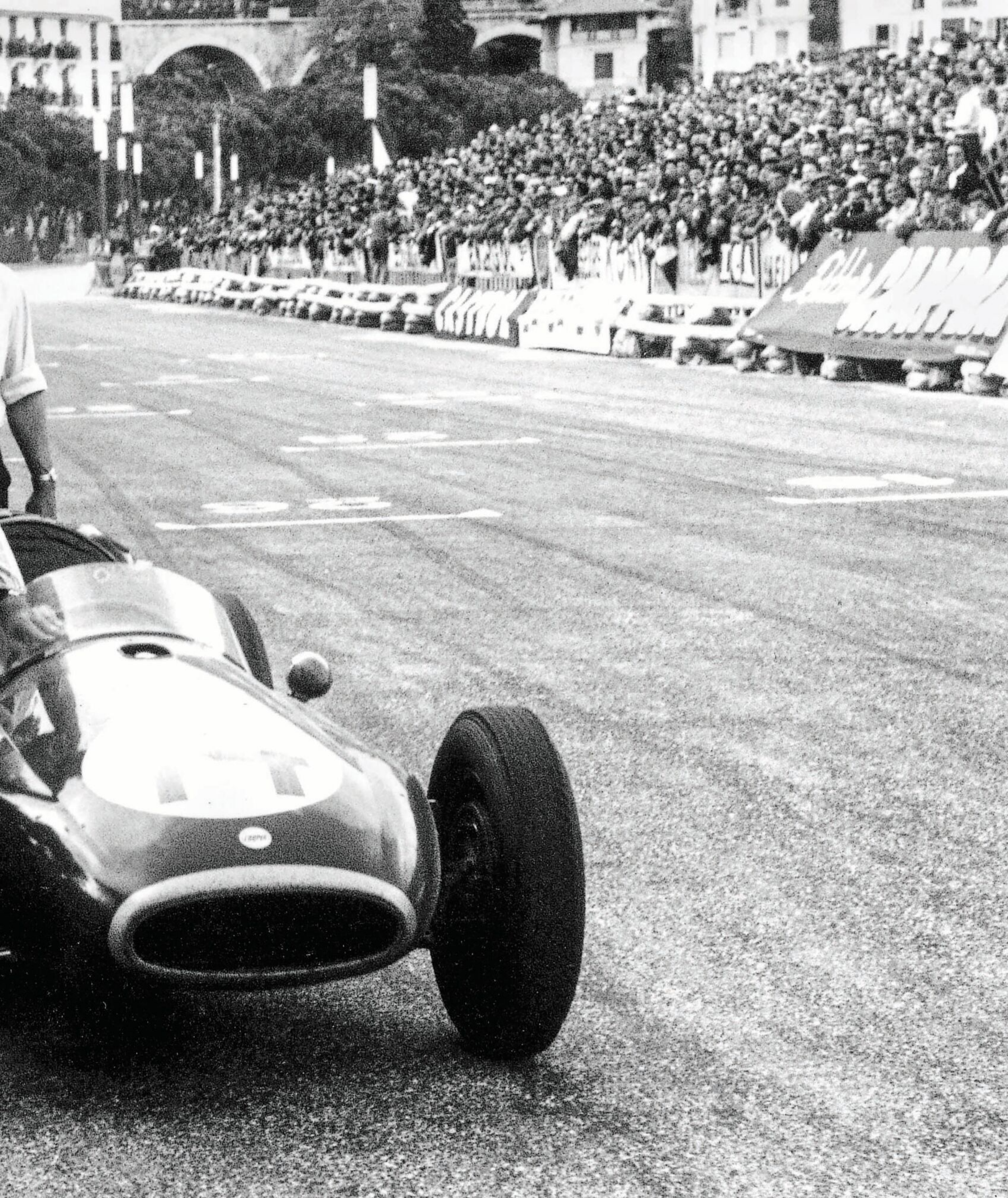
There's a hint of a wry smile on John Cooper's face as he watches Jack Brabham push his car to the finish line at Monaco in 1957. But the future three-time world champion seems

less amused. He's lost a first podium finish because a fuel pump bracket fracture left him running dry. Now he has been forced to put his shoulder to the two-litre Climax-engined T43 to at least be classified as a finisher,

five laps down in sixth. But world championship points only went as far as fifth back then, so it was still a no-score. Two years later the little cars with the engine in the 'wrong end' turned F1 on its tail.

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WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN

When a career-changing move goes begging

DARREN MANNING

Had it not been for an out-of-the-blue phone call in early 2003, 1999 Macau Grand Prix winner Darren Manning believes he could still be racing in Japan to this day. The Yorkshireman was set to join Kazuyoshi Hoshino's Team Impul for a joint campaign in Formula Nippon (now Super Formula) and the All Japan Grand Touring Car Championship (now Super GT) when he was invited by Champ Car boss Chris Pook and team owner Derrick Walker to drive the latter's Reynard, Walker having attracted backing from the RAC with a British driver desirable.

Manning had finished ninth in a one-off at Rockingham for Dale Coyne's team in 2002 with RAC sponsorship, and was a natural choice – but was booked onto a flight for Tokyo the following day to sign contracts with Impul, and pick his apartment/rental car. Cue a scramble as the permutations were worked out, resulting in Manning heading Stateside in "one of the craziest weekends of my life".

Following a season with Walker, finishing as top Reynard and second-best rookie, he joined IRL squad Chip Ganassi following Tony Renna's fatal testing crash – but it was an unhappy time, the team's

Toyota engines no match for the rival Hondas. He was dropped midway through 2005, and second at Watkins Glen in 2008 with Foyt Enterprises would prove his best result. By the time his IndyCar career came to an end in 2009, he was settled in the US with a family and a return to Japan – where he'd won the 1999 Formula 3 title with TOM'S – wasn't on the cards.

Benoit Treluyer (above, inset) inherited Manning's vacant Impul Nippon seat and finished second to team-mate Satoshi Motoyama in 2003, going on to win the title in 2006 and become a three-time Le Mans winner with Audi. Does Manning ever wonder what could have been if he'd eschewed America and gone to Japan?

"I think I'd still be there right now racing, I really do," says the 46-year-old. "If I was in Benoit's position, I'm sure I would have stayed for as long as he did."

It was the second time Manning had come close to a professional contract in Japan. He met with Hoshino ahead of the 2000 season over a Nippon/GT deal, but instead elected to pursue Formula 3000 with Arden – yielding two second places – and a BAR Formula 1 test deal.

JAMES NEWBOLD



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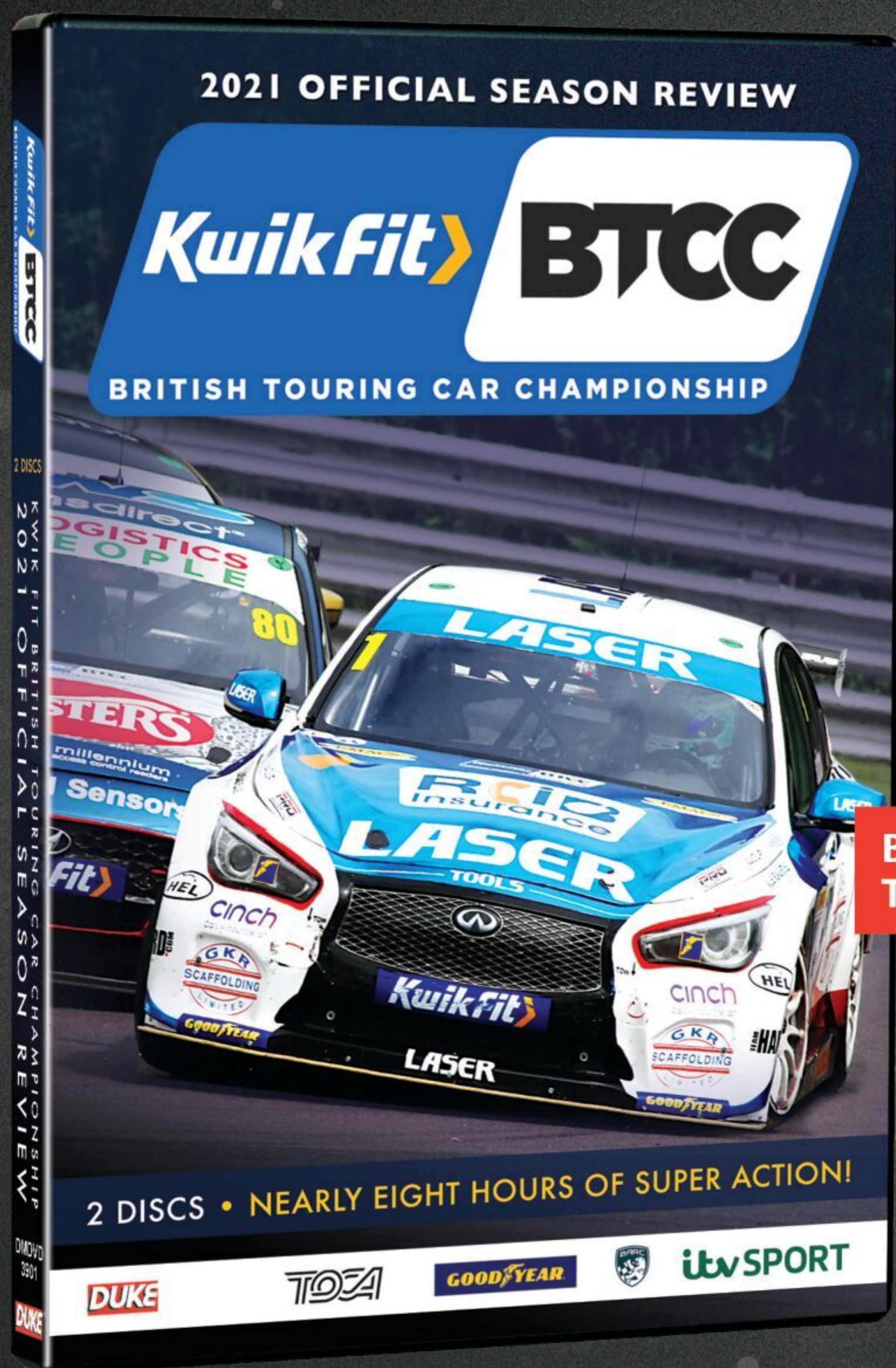
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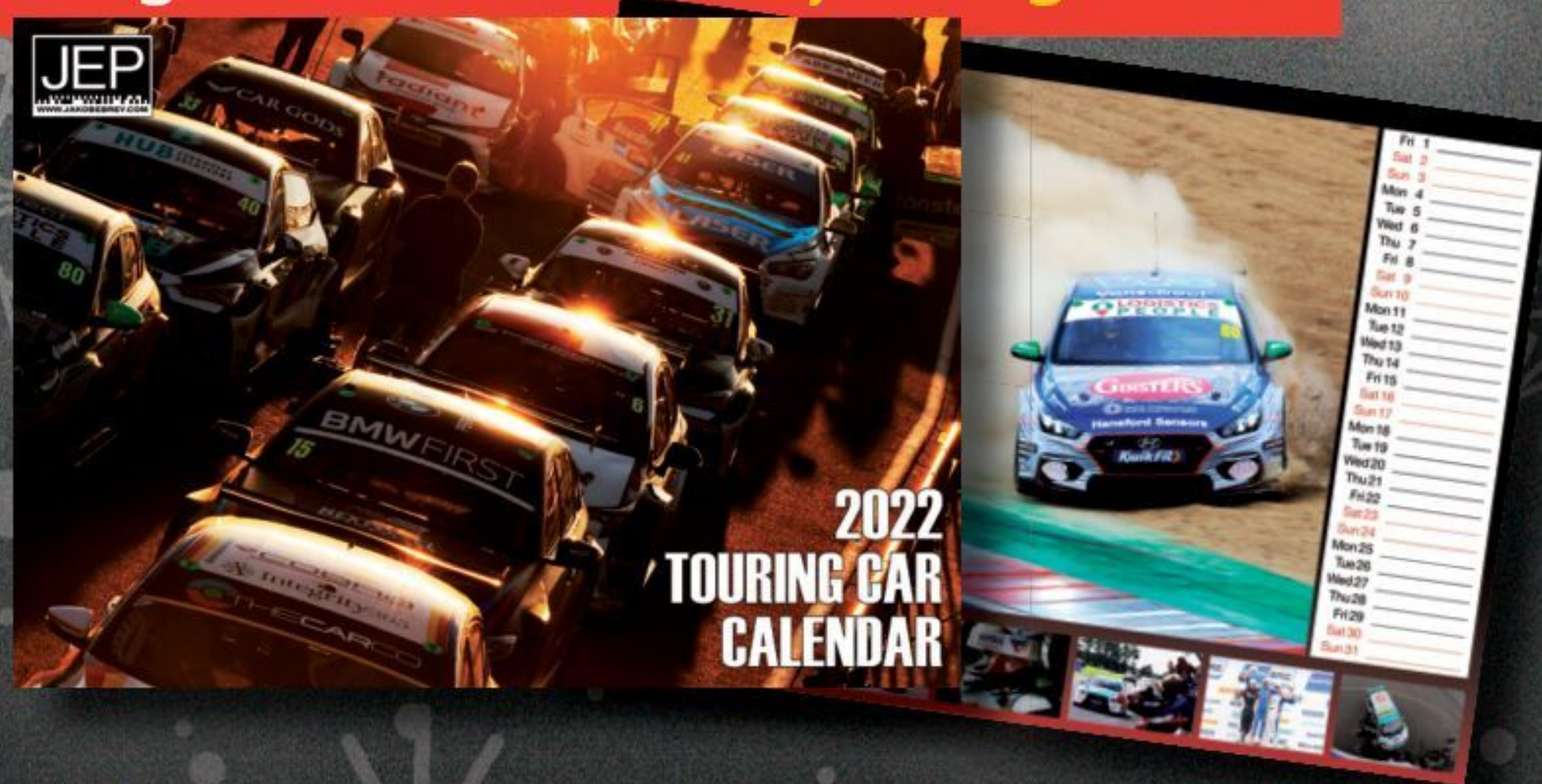


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